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Dame d'honneur de S.A.R. Mad.e la Duchesse de Wurtemberg
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1779—1850
(After a miniature belonging to the family)

MEMOIRS OF MLLE. DES ÉCHEROLLES

THROWING SIDE LIGHTS ON THE REIGN OF TERROR TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY MARIE CLOTHILDE BALFOUR WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY GEORGE K. FORTESCUE

JOHN LANE, PUBLISHER
LONDON & NEW YORK. 1904

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NEW EDITION

1. "Quelques Années de ma Vie." Par Alex. des Écherolles. 2 tom. Moulins, 1843.

   Plates.—Vue du Chateau des Écherolles and three other plates, but not the portrait.

   Deuxième édition. 2 tom. Moulins, 1845.

2. An English translation was published by R. Bentley, 1853, in two vols.

   "Private Trials and Public Calamities; or, The Early Life of Alexandrine des Écherolles," during the troubles of the first French Revolution. From the French by the translator of "The Sicilian Vespers," and the author of "Gentle Influence." *No plates.*

3. "Une Famille noble sous la Terreur." Paris, 1879. *No plates.*

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

DC
146
D45
A3

To

Monsieur Réné de Lespinasse

(*École des Chartes*)

Editor of the "Memoirs of Mdlle. des Écherolles"

THE ENGLISH EDITION

IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

Dedicated

BY THE TRANSLATOR

MARIE CLOTHILDE BALFOUR

INTRODUCTION

The first edition of this book was published by Martial Place, Moulins, in 1843, *under the title* Quelques Années de ma Vie, par Alexandrine des Écherolles, 2 *tom.*

The edition was a small one and was soon exhausted. A second edition by the same publisher followed in 1845. *No other edition was issued until* 1879, *when Monsieur René de Lespinasse edited the work, which was published by E. Plon et Cie, Paris, under the title* Une Famille noble sous la Terreur.

This English translation was published in 1900 *under the title* Side-Lights on the Reign of Terror. *It contains three illustrations, which again appear in the present edition—a view of the Chateau des Écherolles, taken from the first edition of the original French, and portraits of Mademoiselle des Écherolles and of her father which have not appeared in any former edition. For these interesting engravings the Publisher is indebted to Monsieur Pierre Amédée-Pichot, late editor of the* Revue Britannique, *whose many services to English literature demand our grateful acknowledgments. Translations of the work into German and Russian have also been published.*

That the book should have gone through so many

editions, and been so widely read in France and abroad is not to be wondered at. Undoubtedly these memoirs have a charm of their own. The story is told with a straightforward simplicity and absence of hysterical emotion which enlist our sympathies with its authoress at once. They present the pathetic figure of a child brought face to face with the hideous, the cruel and the grotesque features of the Terror. But apart from the personal interest of the story, the narrative has a distinct historical value. Mademoiselle des Écherolles was one of the few persons capable of describing what they saw, who witnessed the whole of the revolutionary torrent which swept over Lyons, from the murder of the officers of the Royal Polish Regiment in September 1792 to the end of the period of judicial murder in the spring of 1794. Lamartine has truly said that we owe to her pen "some of the most touching and dramatic episodes of the Siege." She herself writes, "I can only tell what I myself saw or heard without attempting to thread the mazes of politics, which were beyond my age and understanding. I relate the effects, though I was ignorant of their causes." Madame Roland, who had been one of the first to sow the seeds of violence in Lyons in the early days of her republican idealism, writing three years later in the prison of Sainte Pelagie, with the clearness of view which imminent death brought to her keen intellect, describes the city as "a great town flourishing in consequence of its manufactures and commerce, interesting by its antiquities and its collections, brilliant from its riches—now a vast tomb in which are buried the victims of a government a

hundred times more atrocious than the very despotism on the ruins of which it is elevated." Anything like a detailed account of the history of this doomed city would require a volume, but it may help the reader the better to understand and appreciate the life-like description which Mademoiselle des Écherolles gives of her own experiences to sketch, however briefly, the causes of those events of which she was an eye-witness.

At the outbreak of the Revolution, Lyons, the centre of the thriving silk trade of France, was a flourishing city with a population of about 120,000 *souls. As in every other town in France, the vast majority of the people of all classes hailed the revolution as the beginning of a golden age of prosperity and freedom. In February* 1790 *the* Mercure de France *describes Lyons as the one town in France which remained calm and undisturbed. But in the summer of this year a Jacobin Club was founded by Roland, a member of the Municipality.*

Lyons was too narrow a field for the impetuous Madame Roland, who in February 1791 *carried her husband to Paris, and the Jacobin Club soon fell into the hands of a widely different personage, Joseph Chalier, ex-priest, the Marat of Lyons, who gradually made himself master of the Municipality as well as of the Club. His days were few, but they were exceeding evil. In ordinary times the wild utterances of a furious fanatic pouring forth what Mademoiselle des Écherolles describes as a "stream of blood and lava" might have passed unnoticed, or have attracted the attention only of the*

magistrate or the alienist; but these were no ordinary times. Chalier was known to be the protégé of the Jacobin Club of Paris, the friend of Marat and Robespierre, and for a time the city trembled before him. It was not until he had instigated the murder of the officers, so graphically described in these Memoirs; had organised domiciliary visits, that is to say, the invasion of every respectable household by drunken, blaspheming ruffians; had brought from Paris a guillotine; had proposed the immediate establishment of a Revolutionary Tribunal; and had screamed to admiring mobs, "The great day of vengeance has at last arrived; five hundred men among us deserve to share the fate of the tyrant. I will give you the list; it is your business to strike them," that the people at large, manufacturers, workmen, strangers seeking shelter from agrarian outrages, found that it was time to organise themselves in self-defence.

They could get no help from the Municipality, which had been completely captured by Chalier, or from the respectable series of Mayors who one after another shivered and resigned before the will of Chalier's "Sovereign people"—but they were strongly supported by the Administration of the Department and by the Sections (the electoral divisions of the city), and were able to enroll a strong force of the National Guard and other volunteers. On the 19th of May 1793 the Sections declared themselves in permanent session, and after ten days of fighting and heavy loss (300 dead and 800 wounded), the National Guard, aided by some regular troops, captured the Hôtel de Ville

and the Arsenal which the Jacobins had fortified and took Chalier and his principal supporters prisoners.

Thus Lyons conquered the Jacobins at the very time when the Girondist party was destroyed by the Jacobins of Paris. The towns of the south of France, Marseilles, Lyons, Toulon, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Besançon, combined on behalf of the Girondists and demanded their restoration.

In truth the Convention and Paris itself were in desperate straits during the months of June and July 1793. *In addition to the developing combination of the South, they had to face Normandy seething with revolt in favour of the Girondists, and La Vendée and Brittany, starting everywhere into arms in favour of the Church and King.*

The object of the southern cities was to form a league powerful enough to overawe Paris and to destroy the Jacobin party; and they would probably have succeeded but for one barrier, the Committee of Public Safety, the first real Government which France had possessed since the meeting of the States General. This wonderful Committee was now fully organised, and a few weeks sufficed to raise it into a despotic Government which crushed resistance within and without the Convention with a barbarity as absolute as its strength. The southern towns were isolated and separately attacked by armies which seemed to spring from the earth. Lyons, which had incurred the bitterest wrath of the Committee by the execution of Chalier on the 16*th July, was invested by Kellermann, the general who had just saved*

France from invasion by the Piedmontese, who was aided or thwarted by Dubois de Crancé, one of the few Conventionalists who knew anything of actual warfare, and Gauthier, "Representatives en Mission," as the members of the Convention sent to overawe the provinces or superintend the armies were styled.

The government of Lyons, cut off from outside help, organised an impromptu defence with courage and skill. The President of the "Republican Commission," as the newly-established government styled itself, on the Fête of the Federation, 14th July 1793, issued what amounted to a declaration of war in these terms: "The Sovereign People of the Department of the Rhone and Loire, having been assured that the Convention is no longer free or intact, rise en masse to resist oppression, to maintain the safety of persons and property, and to give to France a free and entire representation."

On the same day Perrin de Précy, retired colonel of the Regiment of Picardy, was formally elected by the National Guard to the command of the Army of the Department of the Rhone and Loire. Précy was a man of energy and courage; he and those who served under him must soon have discovered that their cause was hopeless; but they left no stone unturned to provide the city with food and supplies, and to throw up redoubts and earthwork fortifications. They had only forty pieces of cannon, mostly out of date, but new guns were cast, and by the time that the army of the Convention was assembled the city presented a formidable show of resistance.

Précy had nominally some 10,000 *National Guards and enlisted men under his command; but Mademoiselle des Écherolles is probably correct in stating that of these not more than* 6000 *were to be depended on, nor was there any chance of obtaining reinforcements. The actual siege began on the* 8*th August, at which time Kellermann had under his command* 30,000 *men, increased by constant reinforcements to considerably over* 60,000. *No defence could have been more gallantly maintained than Précy's; again and again the assaults of the enemy were repulsed. The burning of the arsenal by incendiaries within the city on* 24*th August is graphically described by Mademoiselle des Écherolles; this was followed by a general assault, which was again defeated by Précy. In consequence of this defeat Kellermann was removed from his command and summoned to Paris, where he escaped the guillotine only by the accidental delay of his trial until after the fall of Robespierre. General Doppet was appointed in his place with Couthon and Dubois de Crancé as "Representatives en Mission."*

On the 17*th September the city was completely surrounded, and from this date no food or supplies entered it; rations of the smallest amount of food which could maintain life were served out, but even these were soon exhausted.*

Précy, after a vain effort to buy the safety of the city by the surrender of himself and his officers, determined to abandon it with such of his army as he could still muster. On the morning of the 9*th October, at the head of about* 1000 *men, he broke out of the gates and*

endeavoured to fight his way through the lines of the Conventional Army. He himself, with about sixty of his officers and men, made good their retreat through Dauphiné into Switzerland; the remainder were either killed in action or carried back to a worse fate in Lyons. On the same day General Doppet and Dubois de Crancé, with 6000 *troops, entered the city. A military commission was appointed to try those who had been in arms against the Convention; the troops were quartered on the inhabitants, where they behaved in the main (as to their honour be it said the regular soldiers of the Republic usually did), fairly and justly; food poured in, the people ate, drank and slept; and all seemed well.*

Then the storm burst. General Doppet and Dubois de Crancé were superseded by new Representatives, Collot d'Herbois, Couthon, and Fouché of Nantes, afterwards the famous Police Minister of Napoleon. They brought with them the memorable Decree of the Convention ordering: (1) *The destruction of the entire city except the hospitals, schools, and dwellings of the poor;* (2) *The abolition of the name of Lyons and the substitution of the name "Commune Affranchie";* (3) *The erection of a column on the ruins of the city bearing the inscription, "Lyons made war on Liberty: Lyons is no more." In the train of the Proconsuls followed a horde of terrorists, "Buveurs de Sang," as they came to be called; among them Marino, President of the Commission de Surveillance, so graphically sketched by Mademoiselle des Écherolles, Dorfeuille, Javogues, Laussel (ex-priest, created Procureur-Général*

of the Commune), Grandmaison, Pierre Mathieu Parcin, President of the Revolutionary Commission (the Parcin of these Memoirs); and Ronsin, in command of that most terrible of the instruments of the Terror, a "Revolutionary Army" from Paris. These "Revolutionary Armies" must not be confused with the armies who fought the battles of the Revolution. All that was best in France enlisted in the latter; all that was worst, in the former. The Revolutionary Armies were not formed from the race of fighting men; recruited from the criminals, the drunkards, the hopelessly submerged of Paris, from those who formed the mobs of "Sovereign people" of the 10th August, the 2nd and 3rd September, the 31st May—they limited their services to robbery, murder, and outrage, in all of which they attained to a terrible perfection.

The first indication of what was in store for Lyons was the fête of the Apotheosis of Chalier, celebrated by burning collections of ecclesiastical vestments, Bibles, and Service Books; by exhibiting an ass clad in mitre and chasuble, drinking from a chalice (probably of silver gilt, gold plate not being wasted in this way); and by speeches in which the inhabitants were informed that the richest offering to the memory of the republican martyr was the savour of the blood of his enemies. A bust of Chalier was placed on the altar of the Church of Saint Nizier, where litanies were sung to his "sacred heart" and a hundred grotesque blasphemies performed. Then the proconsuls went to work. To Couthon, more of the fanatic and less of the scoundrel than his

the basement of the Hôtel de Ville. Those to be released were placed in the "good cells" on the right, whence they were discharged on the following Décadi; those condemned in the "bad cells," on the left, whence they were either taken next morning to the guillotine, or kept until a sufficient "batch" for the next Fusillade had been collected.

The trial of Mademoiselle des Écherolles' Aunt took place on the 10th February 1794. She was tried and condemned with eleven other women all accused of the same crime; that of concealing or of not denouncing husbands, children, or other relations. The terms of their sentence as entered by the clerk of the court run, "Having heard the replies to the interrogatories made by those named hereunder, the Revolutionary Commission, intimately convinced that they have conspired against the Liberty of the French people by favouring the execution of the counter-revolutionary plans of royalists and refractory priests, condemns them to death and orders the confiscation of their goods." Then follow the twelve names; the eldest being "Marianne Giraud des Écherolles, 60 ans, Rentière, Place du Change." These twelve women were guillotined next morning, together with a priest named Vincent Martin, also aged sixty. On the scaffold they sang together the hymn Salve Regina, *which was finished by the priest alone, the last to suffer.*

Probably Mademoiselle des Écherolles did not know the risk she ran in petitioning Parcin to spare her aunt. Many women and girls who dared to plead in like manner to him, or to his colleagues, were

subjected to the frightful punishment of being tied to the guillotine while the executions were taking place, with an inscription round their necks setting forth their crime in attempting to seduce the virtue of the judges. Others were arrested on the spot, tried, and guillotined as counter-revolutionists: which was the worse punishment, it is hard to say.

The executioners became more expert as time went on. They had bungled terribly over the execution of Chalier. By January 1794 *they were able to boast that on one day they had guillotined* 32 *persons in* 25 *minutes, on another* 13 *in* 10 *minutes; quicker work, it was said, than their brethren of Paris could accomplish. But this was not fast enough. To Collot d'Herbois is usually attributed the invention of the system of Fusillades which was the distinguishing feature of the Terror at Lyons, as the Noyades of Carrier were at Nantes. A description of one of these fusillades will suffice; it differed from others only by the use of muskets instead of cannon, which were subsequently used.*

On the 5th December 1793, 248 *prisoners were brought before the Revolutionary Commission. After a trial lasting for perhaps a quarter of an hour,* 40 *were acquitted, the remaining* 208 *were bound and instantly conveyed by a strong force of the Revolutionary Army, commanded by Grandmaison and Dorfeuille to the plain where the Expiatory Monument now stands. There they were fastened to a long chain stretched from tree to tree;* 900 *soldiers were then marched to within four paces, and the order given to fire. Many fell back dead; many others*

were wounded; a few tried to escape in the smoke and confusion. The wounded were sabred and bayoneted; those who escaped, pursued and killed; or thrown, still breathing, into the ditch dug immediately behind the chain.

"May this Fête," wrote the President of the Revolution to the Convention, "impress for ever a terror on the minds of the wicked and give confidence to the hearts of republicans. Yes, I say this Fête; Fête is the proper word. When crime descends to the tomb, humanity breathes again, and it is the Fête of Virtue."

Other fusillades followed in quick succession, the last on the 11th February 1794. *By this time the condition of Lyons was becoming terrible. The city was infected by the odour of blood; the Rhône was poisoned by the bodies thrown into it; "in order," reported Dorfeuille to the Committee of Public Safety, "that they may announce to all the towns on its banks the Vengeance of the Convention and the extermination of the people of Lyons." The Municipality was obliged to prohibit the sale of fish from the river; and navigation became impossible.*

On the 6th April 1794 *the Revolutionary Commission declared their work ended by the extermination of all the guilty and the acquittal of all the innocent in the prisons of Commune Affranchie. Their last Judgment sounds like poetic justice, but is nevertheless sober fact; it condemned the two executioners to death for being accessory to the martyrdom of Chalier, whom they had guillotined. The execution was carried*

out by their colleague from Clermont Ferrand, brought for the purpose. One of the two, Ripet by name, addressed the spectators in these words, "We are justly condemned; not for having guillotined Chalier, who richly deserved his death, but for having put to death so many good and innocent persons."

The number executed between the 12th October 1793 and the 6th April 1794 amounted to nineteen hundred and five; of whom eleven hundred and twenty-seven were shot in the fusillades, and seven hundred and seventy-eight were guillotined.

On his return to Paris Collot d'Herbois found it desirable to defend himself from the accusation of over-severity. In a long speech, every word of which deserves study, he said, "A drop of blood from the veins of a Patriot falls upon my heart; but I have no pity for conspirators. . . . The thunderbolt of the People strikes like that of heaven, and leaves behind it ashes and annihilation. . . . We, too, have sensibility; the Jacobins have every virtue; they are compassionate, humane and generous; but all these sentiments they reserve for patriots who are their brothers, which aristocrats will never be." Another less elaborated utterance of Collot's forms a curious commentary on his sensibility for patriots. While superintending one of the fusillades, Grandmaison found that he had one more prisoner than the number in his warrant. An unfortunate youth, accused of picking pockets, had been accidentally included in the batch. The young man pleaded hard for life. "He was no Muscadin," he cried, "but a good sans-culotte who had

only been doing a little thieving." Grandmaison reported the case to Collot, and asked for the release of the accidental prisoner. "Oh, no," replied Collot, "one more is better than one less; besides he who dies to-day won't have to die to-morrow." And the unfortunate Patriot perished with the rest.

What can one say of it all? Is France, is humanity the better for all this carnage and horror? That is a question which all must ask and none can answer lightly. As Burke wrote when describing the first days of the Revolution, "It is alternate scorn and horror; it is alternate laughter and tears."

G. K. FORTESCUE.

ETIENNE FRANÇOIS GIRAUD DES ECHEROLLES
Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de Saint Louis
Maréchal des Camps et Armées du Roi, etc.
1731—1810
(After a miniature belonging to the family)

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1879

MEMOIRS relating to the French Revolution offer an interest that is always new. The present volume, first published almost against the will of the author, was, so to speak, confined to her family and a very small circle of readers, when it originally appeared in 1843, under the title of *Quelques Années de ma Vie* (Martial Place, Libraire, Moulins-sur-Allier).

It was received with great praise. Few persons had as yet admitted the public to share in the secrets of their sufferings and misfortunes, but such works were always cordially welcomed by all intelligent and sympathetic minds. M. de Lamartine, in preparing his *Histoire des Girondins*, wished to make himself acquainted with "Some Years of my Life," and was so delighted with the book that he declared he had never met with one so interesting. Since then, no doubt, many memoirs have been published of more weight and importance; but the opinion of our great poet is none the less very flattering. This edition will prove, I hope, a new pleasure to its readers, and is on my part a tribute to the memory of a relation who has devoted many touching pages to the time she passed with my family in the Nivernais. Madame des Écherolles has an unfailing memory for every kindness that she received during her misfortunes; and I feel it an equal duty to assist, something like a century later, in recalling the beauties of a character so admirable as hers.

Preface to the Edition of 1879

Every line of her Memoirs reflects her personal feelings and sufferings. In the terrible scenes of the Terror what affects her most is the ruin of her family, the loss of relatives and friends, the departure from the home where she was born, and later, from her country. Without aspiring to the rôle of historian, or seeking to unravel the complicated events of her time, she is content to tell, in a style as simple as it is exact, the terrible circumstances in which her family found themselves, and the persecution they underwent at the hands of the Revolutionary Government. But from this unassuming method, and in the misfortunes of so worthy and simple a family, we can the better realise what those days really were, when men in power only made use of the name of "the people" to enable them to satisfy their private hatreds and desires for vengeance.

Thirteen years old at the beginning of the Revolution, Alexandrine accompanied her father and aunt in their flight from Moulins. M. des Écherolles had been thrust into prison and menaced with death by the same men who a short time before had unanimously elected him to the command of the National Guard. . . . It was the year 1791; any return to peace and tranquillity was now recognised as hopeless. They went to Lyons, hoping to lose themselves in the crowded population of the great city; but in the midst of massacre and pillage the Lyonnais rose up to defend themselves against the armies of the Revolution, and M. des Écherolles, as an old soldier, accepted a command. His daughter herself was given an active part to play, which permitted her to share in some of the most touching episodes of this marvellous defence. What courage must have animated this handful of champions that dared to fight for freedom, and how hopeless was their task, hampered by insufficient means, and surrounded by treachery! The ardour of the old soldier which had led him for a moment to take up arms, however, was to make his after suffer-

ings the greater; when the town was taken by its assailants, he wandered from house to house, loth to emigrate, sometimes taking refuge with a friend, sometimes begging help from a stranger, making use of every disguise and all imaginable expedients to escape from the clutches of the Government that followed like a wild beast on his heels. In these Memoirs we see the unhappy old man forced to appear and disappear by turns in the most dramatic surroundings, and in scenes that, if they were not so painfully true, might be described as thrillingly interesting.

Alexandrine remained some time at Lyons with her aunt, whom she loved like a second mother. The absence of the father and brothers caused them deep anxiety, but as long as they were together they could at least share their sorrows, in itself a consolation; and their life was far from monotonous. Domiciliary visits, interrogatories, requisitions of all kinds, kept them night and day on the alert; and at last their rooms were sequestrated, and Alexandrine's aunt was thrown into prison for refusing to denounce her brother. There are pages full of details of the life in prison, where women of all conditions were crowded together, denuded of everything, even of necessaries; for Alexandrine, thanks to her youth and by means of money, succeeded in obtaining permission to visit the prison, and continued to do so almost up to the day of her aunt's death. This death was indeed a dreadful blow to the girl. Her aunt, a woman of many gifts both of heart and mind, with great strength of character and very deep affections, left a blank behind her that no one was ever able to fill. Thus, at fourteen years old, Alexandrine was left alone in a large city, without money, and far from her own home!

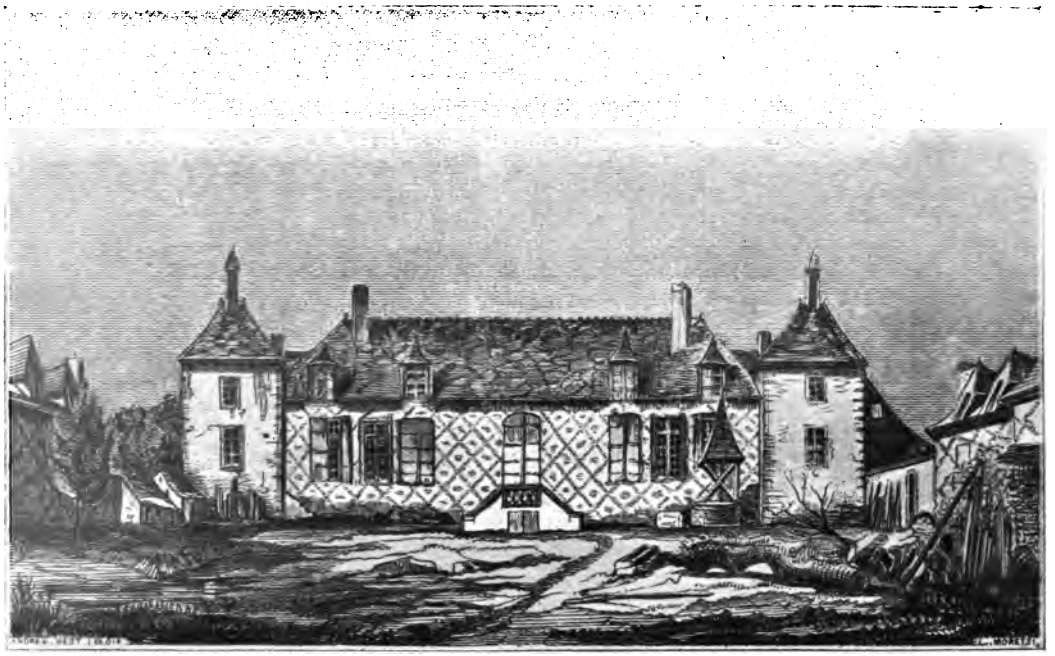
The interest of such a story is undeniable, when to dramatic circumstances are added a wealth of detail and a natural vivacity of style. Every picture is distinct and lifelike; the first meetings of the "brigands" at Moulins; the election of her father, his fall, and

flight; the massacre of the prisoners of Pierre-Cise at Lyons, the story of the siege, her aunt's life in prison, the patriarchal life at Fontaine, in the mill of Mère Chozières, are all superbly described with an unmistakable accent of truth. . . . Certain portraits may even be classed as masterpieces—that, for instance, of the Conventional Marino, when she appealed to him for her aunt's life; that of Citizen Forêt, guardian of the seals, and many others. With great keenness of observation, she never failed to see, even amidst the most terrible surroundings, the comic aspect of persons and things; the descriptions, for instance, of the Château de l'Ombre have a charm that is wholly original.

The last years of the Republic were filled for her with much sadness, for though public misfortunes had ceased, her family was ruined. Madame des Écherolles no longer felt herself needed at home; and having come to that decision she left France, and carried to a foreign court the honour of a spotless name, and the influence of a character that had only been sweetened and strengthened by adversity.

RÉNÉ DE LESPINASSE
(de l'École des Chartes).

CHÂTEAU DE LUANGE, PRÈS NEVERS,
May 1879.



LE CHÂTEAU DES ECHEROLLES

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

CERTAIN reasons, of little value save to myself, have led me to publish these pages, of which the greater number were written many years ago. Although I have cut out a great many useless details, which would not have interested my readers, I fear I may have overlooked many others, but I must claim indulgence for them; for I did not write these Memoirs for the public, they were intended only for the kindly eye of a friend; and although I have not kept to this, my primitive design, I have not attempted to alter my story from the simple style that alone is natural to it. What I felt, that I wrote down; I made no pretence of treating my subject artistically. In the loneliness in which I grew up, it was a relief to write out the thoughts that filled, and fatigued, my brain; as also when I turned to the only Friend who is never wearied with our complaints, I was eased by repeating aloud my sorrows. No doubt they were known already, but it consoled me to pour them out.

I have heard very different opinions expressed of those days already so far removed from us; many persons seem to be convinced that had they been present, they would have shown far greater wisdom and prudence than the men who were actually there. I can only answer by saying, as I have perhaps said too often already in my Memoirs, that those who did not live then can form no idea of that time of torment, when the intoxication of absolute power on

the one hand, and an overwhelming terror on the other, divided France into two classes, executioners and victims. To explain now, to resist then, was alike impossible, and the rapidity with which events followed on each other left but little time for calm reflection.

I repeat again that those who have not been bruised and broken by the whirlwind of the Revolution, should hesitate before they judge of those times. It is as if one attempted, upon a summer's day and in the heart of a serene valley, to realise the tempest that shakes the ocean.

Dedication

It is not vanity that has led me to write at such length of myself, nor the mere desire to recount the sorrows of my life; I have written only for your eyes, child whom I have loved and tended. I have no fortune to leave you save the memory of your family's misfortunes; but therein you may find strength to support your own, if Providence send you any, and your trust in God will increase as you know better how greatly He helps those whom He puts most sharply to the proof.

You will be poor, Maria; the riches of this world will not fall to your share, but if it should happen that some day you regret them, read these pages and you will murmur no longer. Love God, and true riches will be yours; love God, and you will possess everything. Here, on earth, nothing lasts; all these misfortunes that seemed so long and cruel are long past, and when you read these words perhaps I too shall be no more than a memory soon to be effaced. For here on earth, Maria, nothing lasts; remember this in your days of gladness as well as amidst your tears. If in this world you find happiness, do not forget that it can last but for a short time, and fix your heart on the joys that are without end.

NOTE.—This is addressed to Maria des Écherolles, my niece, who was confided to me in childhood by her parents. Brought up far from her own country, I desired to teach her the misfortunes that her family had suffered when the Terror lay heavy over France and crushed its victims under a yoke of iron. I have left my story as I originally wrote it.

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Side Lights on the Reign of Terror

CHAPTER I

Family details—My father's childhood—His marriage—My aunt, his sister, comes to live with us.

MY grandfather,[1] a captain in the Poitou regiment, had two dominant passions, war and the chase. Barely returned from the army, he hurried to the forest, and passed his days and nights in making raids on wolves and boars; this was what he called "reposing himself," and by this kind of life he greatly diminished his fortune. Happily my grandmother, a woman of much intelligence, reduced the disorder into which her husband had brought his affairs; her wise discernment, joined to great energy, saved the family from a ruin that seemed inevitable, and surrounded my grandfather, who cared for nothing but his pleasures, with a comfort which he owed entirely to her economy.

He took his only son with him to join the army, when he was barely nine years old. He wished the child to grow accustomed early to the fatigues and the hard life of a camp, and not only did he so rear the little

[1] Gilbert François Giraud des Écherolles married Martiale-Aimée Melon, whose father had large possessions in the Nivernais. He had by this marriage two children, a son (my father), and a daughter who never married.

soldier, but he surrounded him with a dozen cousins of the same age, and took pleasure in training the courageous little troop. I have heard a Monsieur de Saint-Léger, who lived near Château-Chinon in the Nivernais, speak of my grandfather with enthusiasm; he had himself been one of this company of intrepid children. "We fought well," he said to me; "we did not know what danger was. Your grandfather loved us like sons, but he held us with a firm hand. I owe him a great deal. For instance, I owe him this leg of mine; it had been broken by a ball, and the surgeon was about to amputate, for in those days things were done quickly. 'No,' said your grandfather, 'I answer for that leg!' and, you see, there it is!"

I am sorry that I have lost so many details concerning my family. The Revolution separated me from it before I had reached an age to take much interest in such matters, and since then papers have been burnt and property confiscated or sold, while the poverty and agitation in which my youth was passed have swept away many memories. It is the regret that I feel for this ignorance which has led me to write down the little I have retained of the past and of the circumstances amidst which I have lived, so that I may leave my nephews some links between themselves and their ancestors, whereby, in learning the great misfortunes of their father and grandfather, they may moderate their desires and be content with their own condition. Even my life may serve as a useful lesson to them; they will see therein with what graciousness God deigned to guide me into safety. May they keep in their memory the names of the excellent persons who came to the succour of their parents, and if ever they meet with their children or friends, show them that affection and gratitude which are their due.

It is easy to understand that my father's education suffered greatly from this precocious campaigning,

and that it was impossible for a child of his age to set himself profitably to study when he came home to his winter quarters. It is indeed more surprising that he learnt anything than that he learnt little; and nevertheless he managed to acquire a considerable amount of knowledge. When he was twelve years old he received a sabre-cut on the left cheek and was taken prisoner. The little officer was promptly exchanged, and came back very proud of his "glorious scar," which extended from the ear to the upper lip in a half-circle. His military career was worthy of this beginning; he was seven times wounded, and while still quite young was rewarded with the Cross of St. Louis.

About the age of thirty-six he married Mademoiselle Tarrade, an orphan who lived in retirement in a Paris convent. She was twenty-six, and the retreat in which she had passed her life had encouraged her in serious habits; she was charming to her friends, and brought my father great and enduring happiness. His sister, who had refused every offer and never married, set up a separate household after my grandmother's death, and left my father and mother alone together. They divided their time between town and country, which latter they preferred, for after twenty-one years spent in retirement, my mother had formed a taste for a very quiet life; society had no attractions for her, and indeed, being absent in manner, speaking little, and possessing few popular accomplishments, she found herself unappreciated. But the excellence of her heart and disposition made her dear to her friends, her great charity won the love of the poor, and her sincere piety inspired every one with veneration. I have never heard any one who knew her speak of her save with admiration and regret. Unfortunately she died young, and was soon snatched away from her family. She left four children, two sons and two daughters.

I was then only seven years old. My elder brother,

Martial, though no more than thirteen, was already a cavalry officer; one can understand that my father, who had himself served younger than his son, was in haste to see him also wearing epaulettes. Nevertheless, without speaking here of the public service which assuredly must also suffer by it, I cannot help making some reflections on the abuse of such premature emancipation. There is no doubt but that a child, launched upon the world without being prepared for it by a wise education and by the maturity that comes with years and reflection, there is no doubt, I repeat, that such a child, as he grows into a young man, is exposed to dangers so great that he cannot but succumb to them. Numerous exceptions do not lessen the force of this truth; a boy who is unfortunate enough to be obliged to play at thirteen the part of a man is generally, throughout his life, no better than a feeble plant unable to raise itself from the ground or to bear good fruit, because its roots have not drawn vigour from a development carefully watched over and wisely encouraged.

My mother, when she died, was barely forty-eight years old. I remember with emotion the tears that were shed for her; she was so beloved by the Écherolles peasants that each felt as if he had lost a mother, and with reason. Her farewell was most touching, and young as I was, I have never forgotten it; she called us to her bedside, blessed us, and gave us many good counsels, recommending me repeatedly to my brothers, and begging them to protect and care for my elder sister Odille, whose mind was feeble and her sufferings constant. She forbade all extravagance at her burial, and disposed of the sums that should have been thus expended in doubling the alms to be given to the poor for food and clothes. The more I reflect on our loss, the more deeply I realise what it meant for us: how abandoned are young children when deprived of their mother, and of her care and never-ceasing watchfulness.

My Aunt des Écherolles

I do not know why my father neglected to fulfil one of my mother's last desires, since I was not sent to a convent as she had wished. Perhaps he sought consolation in keeping his children near him. His sister, Mdlle. des Écherolles, undertook my education, and came to live with us; we left Écherolles and removed to town, as my aunt did not care for the country. Chambolle, my younger brother, was sent to the military school at Metz; and the regiment in which my elder brother served happening to be stationed at Moulins, he was able to live in my father's house along with me and my sister, whose condition caused us great anxiety and left little hope of cure.

My aunt grew exceedingly attached to me, and her maternal tenderness increased from day to day. In looking back I cannot but think with sorrow of the pain I caused her, in clamouring to be sent to a convent; I knew that such had been my mother's last wish, and I suffered, as if it had been a personal injury, from the fact that it should have been neglected and set aside. The presents that were showered upon me, the pleasures that I was made to share, the tenderest care and kindness, never made me forget my mother's desire. Often, too often indeed, I begged my aunt to fulfil it. "Am I not also your mother?" she would say: "I cannot send you away from me!" When I visited my friends at school, the sight of the convent parlour only increased my regrets; I envied them their accomplishments and their education. The pretty rosettes upon their shoulders, showing the place they took in their classes, awakened my emulation: disdainful of the comforts with which I was surrounded, I repeated unceasingly, "Why am I not at a convent? I cannot be happy anywhere else."

My aunt, who liked society, frequently took me out with her, young as I was. I still recall with a shiver those long tedious visits when, seated very upright and silent, I counted the panes of glass in the windows or the flowers in the embroidered hangings, to pass the

time. I already possessed my mother's jewels, and for my age was very richly dressed ; I had plenty of young companions, and my every fancy was indulged, yet still I was not content. My aunt, unhappy because I was unhappy, asked me repeatedly, "What ailed me, and what I lacked?" and as repeatedly I answered, "I want to go to a convent." It wrung her heart ; it led her in the end to form a plan for going to Paris to lodge in a convent where, without being separated from her, I could share the education of the boarders. She was ready to break up all her habits, to quit a society that was agreeable to her, to give up her independence ; she would have submitted, through love of me, to all the monotony of the monastic rule ; she would have done all that for me! How often, since then, have I reproached myself with paining her by my ingratitude and discontent!

At this time Chambolle came back from Metz, and we should have all started for Paris, had not the Revolution made such a rapid and sudden progress that no one in France could think of anything else.

CHAPTER II

"The Brigands" — My father appointed commandant of the National Guard at Moulins — Emigration of my brothers — Arrest of Noailly — My father saves him — The people's hatred — Increase of public agitation — My father resigns his command.

IT was by the famous day of "the Brigands" that the Revolution fairly announced itself to me. My age did not allow me to understand its importance, but only to enjoy the noise and excitement, if I may so express myself, for a child is pleased by the novelty of disorder and misrule. It came upon us suddenly; from every side, at the same instant, couriers brought in the news that troops of brigands were advancing against us, were there, had been seen, were closely following; we must arm in our own defence.[1] The citizens were called together, officers were appointed to lead them, and my father was chosen as chief in command; he was out walking, when he was surrounded and proclaimed colonel. At first he refused, but they would not listen to him, and, after hesitating for some time, he finally gave way and accepted the post, to my aunt's great distress; I remember that she begged him to have nothing to do with so dangerous an honour. But it was already too late; the tears filled her eyes as she saw him led home in the midst of a great crowd and a guard of honour placed at his door; he no longer belonged to himself, and as a public man the interests of his family, and his children, were

[1] This alarm was so general that from all sides there came in numerous troops of peasants armed with picks and forks, clamouring to be sent out against the brigands and to discover where they were.

but secondary. Our journey to Paris, our plans, all had to be given up ; we must stay where we were.

Moulins was as excited as every other town in the kingdom on that day, when, stirred to panic, the people rose up *en masse* against the invisible "brigands," who were but a chimera invented to set France in arms. But those who first set in motion the wheels of this formidable machinery were soon no longer able to arrest it, and were themselves crushed by it; the Revolution developed at a fearful speed, and terror was mingled even with its pleasures. Daughter of trouble and discord, what else could she produce ?

My elder brother remained with his regiment, which was still in garrison at Moulins ; the younger returned home. I had masters, my aunt went more into society than ever, and my father was taken up with his new duties. The Confederation sent him to Paris, at the head of a deputation from the department of Allier; he came home in despair, having persuaded himself that on that famous day on the Champ de Mars, the king would have marched at the head of his troops to dissolve the National Assembly. "To have done this," he told us, "would have saved France and the king, who did not know how to profit by the enthusiasm he could still inspire." Shortly after, the great troubles began ; the populace were excited into revolt, accusations against those who bought up corn were multiplied, and rumours were spread of the famines caused, it was declared, by the ill-will of such enemies of the people. For, believing all they were told, the people discovered enemies on every side.

M. Noailly, a rich corn-merchant who lived at Droiturier, was arrested by the inhabitants of Lapalisse, bound and gagged, as an aristocrat and "starver" of the people; he was brought to Moulins to serve as a distraction for the mob, which was secretly instigated to the most terrible excesses. My father called out his troops and went to meet Noailly, and, with the pretext of keeping him under his own eye, took him

into his carriage; but he had not been there a few moments when the horses were seized and unharnessed, and the wheels broken. My father sprang to the ground, and speaking to the excited crowds, assured them he had no intention of allowing Noailly to escape; that it was to make sure of keeping him safe to be judged by all the rigour of the law that he was escorting him to prison. Holding his charge firmly by the collar, he walked in the midst of the ruffians, expecting every instant to be assassinated along with his unfortunate prisoner, and succeeded in conveying him into safety, after having suffered at every step an agony of apprehension little less bitter than death. The prison guard was doubled; the mob, thinking to rend its victim another day, withdrew. The affair was allowed to drag on slowly, giving time for the excitement to quiet down and for Noailly to be forgotten; he was ultimately set secretly at liberty, and hurried out of reach during the dark hours of the night. Some time afterwards it was given out that nothing had been proved against him, and that the accusations were unfounded; but the populace never forgave my father for having baulked their fury, and from this moment the favour they had shown him changed to an implacable ill-will. Finding that he had lost all influence and authority, he resigned his command. My age then does not permit me to recall all the political details of the time, details which were above and beyond my capacity; but I well remember that my father's firmness gained him powerful enemies. His efforts to maintain peace and put down the disorders that were encouraged amongst the people concentrated the storm upon his own head; when he was no longer in authority, there was nothing to shield him from any violence, he was given up to every form of abuse that calumny could invent, and for the good work he had tried to do, he was repaid by a black ingratitude.

Much has been said, both ill and good, of the

emigration of these times; I shall limit myself to a very short observation.

Now that years have passed since those days of effervescence, now that the passions which then stirred men are as dead as they themselves, since their efforts were not crowned by success and their sacrifices were vain, is it not unjust to judge so hardly the enthusiasm that swept Frenchmen into following their princes? Every noble, faithful to his king, looked upon it as a duty; old military men, peaceable civilians, fathers of families, responded to the call, and quitted without hesitation their homes and children to take up the hard and adventurous life of common soldiers. Other passions sway the present generation; it cannot comprehend those of a past epoch, and in its turn it will not be understood by the generations that follow.

It was difficult to resist such a contagious opinion, or sentiment, based as it was upon a feeling of honour: it became—shall I say it?—an imperious fashion, not to be avoided; one had to go—or be disgraced.

I well remember the agitation of our families, their secret meetings, the interest with which the news "from over-Rhine" was discussed. "When are you going? You must hasten or you will be too late, and they will come back without you. It is for so short a time!" A feverish sense of chivalry set the blood boiling in all men's veins; those who resisted it, degraded in the eyes of other gentlemen, were in some sort shut out from their ranks. Those who still hesitated, stung by sarcasm and ridicule, could only escape from both by hurrying to Coblentz; for the women, too often extreme on the side they favour, goaded without pity such as could not make up their minds. Nightcaps, baby-dolls, and spindles were sent to them, accompanied by mysterious and anonymous letters full of bitterest mockery; in fact, everything was done that could excite men's ardour or awaken their love of glory, and everything, even to the mystery with which

it was enveloped, added to the charm of this chivalrous influence that was exerted to drive men out of France.

The officers of the Royal Guyenne Regiment emigrated, and my elder brother went with them; the younger started shortly after with one of our cousins.

As soon as my brothers' departure was known, it was counted as a new crime in my father. My aunt, who saw well how the irritation against him increased and realised that sooner or later this ill-will would lead to violent measures of which he would be the victim, tried to persuade him to leave Moulins, but without success; possibly it was already too late to escape, or perhaps he did not think the absurd calumnies that had been set afloat were dangerous for his safety. In fact, even before he had given up his command, there had been spread amongst the people accusations so ridiculous that they would have seemed impossible of belief were it not well known that a mob is more ignorant and more credulous than a child. For instance, it was said that by my father's order mines had been laid under the cathedral to blow it up during midnight mass; yet we were ourselves all present to give the lie to such a statement! A second mine was to explode in the Cours de Bercy during a popular fête to celebrate I know not what great event; cannon hidden in the thick shrubberies of a garden belonging to M. de Gaulmyn were at the same time to be fired into the panic-stricken crowd and complete the massacre. Lastly, my father's house was full of arms, and iron hooks, whereby to hang patriots from the trees on the promenade! It is impossible to imagine anything more senseless, and I do not know who can have taken the trouble to invent such fables. But I do know that the terrible spoilt child that is called "the populace" listened to these extraordinary tales, frightened itself with them, and determined to take vengeance at any cost; little by little, in passing from mouth to mouth, these absurdities grew in force

and credibility, and the last remnant of confidence felt in my father was totally destroyed. The mob, which never pauses to reflect, and is as violent in its favour as in its fury, accepted these abominable stories without asking if they were possible, and my father became not only the object of its hatred, but also the cause of its alarm.

It was in the midst of this general fermentation that I made my first communion, Thursday, in Passion-Week of the year 1792, in the church of the Sisters of the Cross. I was still very young, but the Abbé Ripond, my confessor, advised my aunt not to put it off till I was older. "She is only eleven," he said, "and you think her scarcely fit to be admitted to the holy Table; let us hope, however, that such preparation as she has received is sufficient for the moment, and sorrow will teach her the rest. Bad days are coming; let her receive the sacrament that will strengthen her for them. Soon, perhaps, I shall no longer be able to call her to the altar, for the pastor and his sheep will be separated and dispersed, the temples profaned, and desolation will be spread about us."

Already, indeed, several churches had been closed because the priests who served in them had refused to take the oath (of obedience and allegiance to the new constitution); and in others, mass was said secretly, and at daybreak. M. de Latour, our bishop, having refused the oath, had gone to Rome, and an "intruder"[1] had been put in his place; many ecclesiastics had taken flight; all of which confirmed but too strongly Abbé Ripond's warnings. My father and aunt, therefore, consented to what he desired, and I made my communion at dawn, and alone. Several of my companions, who were to have made it with me, were obliged to take the same precautions for fear of drawing a dangerous attention to their families.

[1] This "intrus" (as they were called) wore, when at the altar, a red "Cap of Liberty" in place of a mitre!

Increase of Public Agitation

A few days later, all the churches were shut up save those which were served by priests who had taken the oath.

About this time, circumstances occurred that gave my father an appearance of guilt—or rather, to express myself more exactly, that were made by his enemies to convey that appearance. One M. G——, who had run through a large fortune in unsound speculations, took it into his head at an unlucky moment to send for some Normandy horses, hoping to resell them at a profit. At the same period my father, who still held his command, was proposing to raise a squadron of the better-class citizens, as a means of keeping peace and as a check on those who tried to excite and irritate the populace. Members of many well-born families enrolled themselves in this company, which, however, never existed save in project; but the plan becoming known, it was presently made the foundation of a new charge against my father. It chanced that about the same time he despatched a sum of money to my brothers by a man named Robin; this man, who had been long in our service, had barely started when he was set upon, arrested, and brought back, a prisoner, to Moulins. I do not know whether he had connived at it, or whether he had been simply unfortunate; at any rate, all these things united to work against my father, M. G——'s horses were to serve as mounts for a troop of aristocrats, whose secret aim was said to be the destruction of liberty; Robin, sent in secret to Condé's army, was the bearer of plans for a counter-revolution, &c.

With so many accusations against him, my father could not hope to escape. An order for his arrest was issued in the beginning of the month of June 1792; but through a certain remnant of respect which was shortly to disappear, he was not carried by force to prison, but only ordered to betake himself there. This order he received with concentrated fury. "I, in prison!" he cried, striding up and down; "I, who

am covered with glorious wounds; I, who in all my long service have never even been reprimanded! In prison!" . . . For the terrible sufferings that were to purge France had only just begun, and the prisons were not yet ennobled by the quality of their inmates, as later they were to become; they were still associated with disgrace and dishonour, and were looked upon with a natural horror and repugnance.

CHAPTER III

My father in prison—*Au secret*—His examination—His life menaced—Persecution—Arrest of a peasant—Innocence recognised—Fine conduct of M. Conny de la Faie, President of the Tribunal—My father owes him liberty and life.

IN the evening my father, after embracing us, started alone for the prison; my aunt's affection was the greater because she realised in full the magnitude of the dangers that menaced him. For five days he was in secret confinement, during which time he was ill with a pleurisy, but he was refused permission to see a doctor or to obtain any of the necessaries required by his condition. However, his servant, an honest and faithful fellow named Brugnon, finding that as a free man he could not be permitted to attend upon his master, gave himself up and became a prisoner also. There were at the same time in the prison Robin, of whom I have spoken, and Faure, implicated in the same affair; the latter had formerly served in the Royal Guyenne Regiment, at first as a private soldier and then as a subaltern, and finally left the service and started a school, being a man of some education. I do not know how he was concerned with the accusations made against my father.

As soon as my father's imprisonment was known, our friends thronged round my aunt to express their sympathy in so sad an event, especially the ladies, who, more demonstratively compassionate and less apt than men to calculate danger or conform to expediency, were eager to express their interest to the full. My aunt, touched by so many marks of friendship, took the opportunity of rallying every possible

supporter of her brother, in order to minimise the influence of his enemies, who were very numerous; my father's hot and impulsive character had set many against him. They wished to get rid of him, and were determined to succeed. It required very great prudence and foresight to be prepared for, and to parry, their attacks.

After several days of strict confinement, it was announced that my father was to be examined in the church of the Minimes, and that he would walk thither in chains between Faure and Robin. This church, being at a considerable distance from the prison, a large portion of the town had to be traversed in order to reach it.

My aunt, in despair, appealed to the authorities, pointing out that her brother had for several days been exceedingly ill; that it would probably be impossible for him to stand on his own feet, far more to walk so great a distance; but it was with difficulty that she obtained permission for him to be carried immediately behind his comrades in misfortune. Indeed, when he did rise for the first time since he went to prison (having up to that time taken no nourishment), he was too weak to walk or to support himself, and was obliged to sit down, in this fashion being dragged by the gaoler to the sedan chair which was to carry him to the Minimes. He was in his dressing-gown, not having been strong enough to dress himself completely; but the sight of a man still so grievously ill did not soften the people towards him. They yelled out the foulest of imprecations as soon as they saw him; and when he heard them clamouring for his death, and shouting, "Turn him out of that—make him walk!"—indignation took the place of strength, and he walked the rest of the way. It was a terrible journey.

When he arrived at the church of the Minimes, which was then used as a court of justice, the mob rushed into it, howling for his blood like a wild beast for its prey; and several times during the examination

the guards were obliged to threaten the people with their muskets to keep them under control. This examination was public, and, by great good fortune, my father's illness had weakened his voice; for the vehement and bitter answers that he made in his anger would certainly have worked his ruin had they been heard by the audience. As it was, he spoke very low, and there was much noise; and the reporter, as we learnt later, in writing down his replies gave them a more favourable turn. Some of the judges were inclined to my father's side, but many were against him, or at least it was doubtful whether they would dare to protect him, innocent though he might be. While this examination was going on, many persons were with my aunt, and frequent messages came to reassure or to alarm us. Those who brought them frightened us with their own fears; and in picturing to ourselves the fury of the mob, we scarcely dared to hope ever to see our dear sufferer again. But at last one of our relatives, who had mingled with the crowd and been present at the cruel scene, came to tell us that, after having run the most imminent danger, my father had just reached the prison. At that moment we wished for nothing but to know him once more there in safety.

My aunt having obtained leave for an interview after the examination, we immediately went to see our prisoner, and found him seated by the fire, trembling more with anger than with fear, a prey to the violent feelings which still agitated him; the joy of seeing us calmed him a little, but I cannot describe our meeting. Yet even in the midst of this great happiness we felt the dagger's point; at any instant it might strike him again, and we knew that the danger was perhaps but delayed.

We found the Abbé Papon with him, endeavouring to soothe his excitement with the consolations of religion. This pious priest was himself a prisoner, condemned to a year's detention for having received and

made public a papal brief; indeed, he was to be a prisoner for life. For it chanced that the refractory clergy were thrown into prison before his time was up, so that he was included with this proscribed class; and died in gaol before they were set free by the return to power of a more moderate government.

I must not omit to acknowledge here the excellence of the gaoler (who was named Bruxelle); his kindness, his attentions were never lacking; he softened so far as he could the lot of those who were confided to his charge, and all found in him a compassionate heart and a sure and faithful friend. The name of such a gaoler should never be forgotten. His eyes were full of tears as he led us to my father's room, which was large and airy, the windows, covered with a grating, looking out over the country. But to reach this chamber we had to pass through narrow and evil-smelling corridors, where the air was fetid with smells from the overcrowded infirmary.

In those early days we were free to see our prisoner as often as we wished, and even to dine with him. He shared his table with the Abbé Papon, who was lodged in a small closet opening from my father's room; Faure also took his meals there. All the persons of our acquaintance came to pay us visits, for fear had not yet paralysed affection, and each was anxious to show his sympathy; if in looking on the walls it had not been easy to see that it was a prison, one might have fancied oneself in some brilliant salon. The ladies of Moulins took a kind of pride in rendering such public reverence to misfortune and innocence; but this sympathy with my father, shown so openly by his friends, soon gave offence, and presently he was not only forbidden to receive general visitors, but only one person of his family was to be allowed to enter his prison daily. I went there at seven o'clock in the morning. The sentinels, being frequently changed, usually ended by forgetting that I had passed in, and, whether through short memory or by good-will, made

no difficulty about admitting my aunt when she came at midday. We dined together and did not leave the prison till late. I cannot express the sadness that came over me when we returned to our lonely and deserted house, where nothing was to be heard but the cries and moans of my sister Odille, who could not share our fate, whatever it might be, any more than she could change her own. Suffering was all that she knew of life, but the want of reason prevented her from being conscious of unhappiness.

An old servant, named Saapa, had left us immediately after my father was arrested. Imbued with the new ideas, he looked upon us as monsters, and to escape from the contagion of "aristocracy," he left the house and would not even salute us when we met him. The famous "liberty" of those days was too often but a licence to be cruel and ungrateful. The story of Saapa, whom we called Saint-Pierre, was a curious one. He was the son of a Venetian noble, who, having married beneath him and against the will of his family, had been forced to seek refuge in France, where he settled in the Nivernais. At the end of many years he went home, hoping to be reconciled with his parents, and left his two sons with persons in whom he had confidence, placing in their hands a sum of money sufficient to bring up his children suitably to their position. But those who held this double charge abused it; the money they appropriated, and the boys were sent out as swineherds. Whether their father died, or whether he was persuaded into annulling his marriage, is not known; but nothing more was heard of him, and his sons grew up as domestic servants and ultimately became soldiers, Saint-Pierre making his first campaign under my grandfather. When my grandmother heard his story and had looked over his papers, she offered to take steps to have him reinstated in his proper place, so that it seems he could then have justified his claims; but servitude had broken his spirit, and he and his brother preferred to

live and die as they were rather than to upset their ease of mind by a suit of which the issue seemed to them doubtful. . . . Our ungrateful Saapa, having left us, died soon after in hospital.

About this time I met with a great vexation: it was the loss of my dearest friend, which I felt, not so much because she ceased to care for me, but because I was rightly indignant with the conduct of her parents, who shut their doors against me lest they should themselves be compromised. How angry I was! It was the first blow to my affections; and already, although I was so young, I discovered that society friendships are generally not to be relied on. My friend's father, who had been a constant visitor of my aunt's in the days of her prosperity, took good care to avoid her in her misfortunes; his daughter Julie was made to do the same, and I learnt a truth known to every one, and yet which always seems as new as it is unexpected, that "the unfortunate have no friends."

There was now some question of sending my father to Orleans, where several persons of importance were already confined, who were later transferred to Versailles and all massacred in the Orangery. My aunt, who surely had a presentiment of some such fate, did all in her power to procure his being brought up for judgment at Moulins itself, where he would benefit by any interest still felt in him by some of the judges and certain among the inhabitants. As far as I can recollect, my aunt's views were generally correct and her foresight very remarkable; she was rarely deceived in her judgment of events. From a gay, brilliant woman, noted for her wit and her fine and frequent humour, she developed into all her splendid force of character; and through the mere outer charm of intellect and amiability there shone forth, as through an envelope, the real greatness of her spirit. Already we were under great obligations to her, and her devotion to us was limitless as her generosity; later on, we literally lived upon her, not only on her income, but on the

capital obtained by the sale of a property that she sacrificed without a moment's hesitation in order to support us.

In order to make the time I spent at the prison seem less long and wearisome, and to utilise it, Faure gave me lessons in geography, the globes, and physics; and to vary the monotonous occupations with which I filled my hours at this gloomy place, he brought into my father's room a little electric machine with which he showed me different experiments. These innocent amusements, however, excited suspicion, or rather gave occasion for a singular means of persecution which was quickly seized upon. The heat at this time was very great; for eight consecutive days there were frequent storms, thunderbolts fell several times in the town, and a certain G——, one of my father's denouncers and a zealous "patriot," was struck by lightning while galloping his horse along the high-road. The funeral honours rendered to him were all the greater because he was my father's enemy. . . . But whence came all these accidents? What brought so many misfortunes on the town and its citizens? Evidently, it was my father himself, whose experiments in physics had no less an aim than to draw the lightning down upon Moulins, and to spread mourning and fear among its inhabitants! This story was quite to the popular taste, being marvellous and incomprehensible; they were persuaded of their danger, without reflecting that my father, confined in a tower in the highest part of the town, was in more danger than any one else. The electric machine was carried off, and all experiments or even studies were strictly forbidden. Moreover, the beggars who sat below the prison windows now accused my father of having thrown them money through the gratings to bribe them into carrying secret messages for him; thus he dared no longer either give alms to the poor, or approach the window to breathe a little purer air!

Who, in these sad times, does not know what a

prison is, and how grievously long is a single hour passed therein! More closely confined than ever, my father counted the slow minutes, till an unexpected event brought us a joy so pure and unselfish that I cannot resist letting a reflection of it shine upon these gloomy pages.

In some village of the department—I do not now remember which—a peasant was discovered in the middle of the night beside the newly murdered priest of his parish. The *curé* had only time to point towards him with his feeble hand, and died with his name upon his lips, a very sentence of death in this single word. The man held in his hand a bloody knife, his clothes were bloodstained, it was night, the *curé* himself had named him—what a testimony to his guilt! He was arrested, examined; he declared that he had come to the help of his master, had struggled with the real murderer, and affirmed his complete innocence. All who knew him believed his declaration, for his life had always been that of an upright and honest man; but with appearances so strongly against him, it was useless to protest that he was not guilty. Strongly influenced in his favour by all that could be known of his character and morality, justice hesitated to pronounce sentence of death, yet dared not acquit him—is she not proverbially blind?—and at length he was condemned to irons and twenty years of imprisonment. Twenty years! The unhappy man would rather have died than know himself so dishonoured and leaving a heritage of infamy to his children. In his misery and despair he fell ill of a serious malady that kept him for the time being out of the cell in which, for twenty years, he was to be no better than a dead man; and would have sunk under his sufferings but for the care and kindness of his gaoler, the consolations of Abbé Papon, and the good nourishment that my father sent him from his own table. And then one day—what a day! I shall never in my life forget it! He was suddenly given back to

honour, to his children, to life. His innocence was established, and so great and unexpected was his joy that it was almost more than he could bear. The tribunal of Riom had just condemned to death a man guilty of many crimes, who declared on the scaffold that he would at least make one person happy. There was, he said, in the prison at Moulins an innocent man condemned in his place, a man who in truth had only run to the defence of his murdered master. How can I describe our joy? Only the heart can comprehend it. . . . The honest fellow, who almost succumbed to the shock of such unexpected happiness, was soon cured, and went away laden with gifts and good wishes.

There were many peasants in the prison sentenced to some months' detention for having insulted their mayor or thrown his bench out of the church.

"*Dame!*" said one, a fine young man, "they burnt my lord's seat, and then they wanted to have one themselves! I wasn't going to look on while the mayoress squatted in the church like a real my lady. She is no better than we are."

In some town in our neighbourhood, I do not remember which, an honest fellow was condemned, for a similar offence, to several hours in the pillory. The poor man was in despair at the thought of being exposed in sight of the mob as if he were a vile criminal, and some of the young men of the town understood his feelings and sympathised with them. Scarcely had he appeared in the pillory than an obliging clock struck twelve, the hour at which his punishment was to end. . . . Justice shut its eyes to this simple trick, and the man got off.

The day of my father's trial drew near, and our fears grew stronger. We doubted sorely whether in truth *justice* would preside at it. The news from all parts was very alarming, telling of general excitement and agitation. France, darkened with brooding storms, counted amongst her children many men who were

only waiting for the moment when they could be criminal with impunity. We were walking on a volcano; the air seemed full of a thousand unfamiliar murmurs, like the oncoming of a tempest, and our days were as anxious as our nights were sleepless. In the tribunal that was to judge my father there were many of his enemies, and officious folk, such as are always to be found, had told him there were several who demanded his death. Thus the second month of his imprisonment passed away.

It was in the early days of August; worn out with our anxieties we were watching the sunset, or rather the gradual fading of its light; the evening was already advanced and darkening, when the gaoler burst into the room with a paper in his hand. He trembled, he wept, he could neither speak nor stand, and had to sit down. Did he bring a sentence of death?

"What is it, M. Bruxelle? What is that paper?" my father asked.

"You are free, monsieur!" at last broke out the worthy man, scarcely able to speak. "You are free!"

My father caught him in his arms. His first words, after thanking God, were to express gratitude for all his kindness.

Having taken leave of his companions in misfortune, he left the prison and we went home—what a sad return, almost clandestine, and yet how happy!—and next day, as soon as the thing was known, all our friends came to see and congratulate him.

We owed the joy of this triumph to M. Conny de la Faie, President of the Tribunal, a man of rare merit, of recognised excellence, altogether worthy of the place he occupied, and generally esteemed. This faithful magistrate fearlessly raised his voice in defence of the innocent victim already designed for the sacrifice; his eloquence touched his hearers' hearts and convinced their minds. At this solemn moment

a violent storm broke overhead; he took Heaven to witness his love of justice and zeal to defend the right, and called down avenging thunders on all who would betray them. He forced alike the hesitating and the perverse to yield up the life and liberty of one whom they had resolved to destroy—my father was acquitted. M. de la Faie saved an innocent man's life, and we owe him an eternal gratitude that only God can repay.

How I had changed in these two months! My childhood had come to an end, and for me there were to be no more childish games, no illusions, no laughter. I had even outgrown the desire for them. My mind had been developed beyond my years, and I had lost a certain equilibrium; my confidence in the future was shaken, and misfortune had taken hold of me.

CHAPTER IV

My father goes to Lyons—We accompany him—Arrest of the officers of the Royal Polish—We settle in the suburb of Vaise—My father forced to fly—Massacres of the 9th September 1793—On the passage of the Marseillais—Mme. Sériziot turns us out.

THE very day after he came out of prison my father was given his passport, with three days in which to put his affairs in order and to quit Moulins. His presence, it was said, was dangerous to the public tranquillity, the people not having ratified his acquittal, and the guard set to protect him was doubled. We did not take even the three days accorded to us before we started for his estate of Écherolles, about fourteen miles from Moulins, where he hoped to stay while gathering his possessions together and making his plans; but we had scarcely arrived there when friends hurried after us to give warning of the growing excitement of the mob. There had been great gatherings at which it was proposed to come out and burn Écherolles, and recapture the prisoner who had been allowed to escape; it was impossible to know what they would actually do, and it was wiser not to wait to see. But where to go? There could no longer be any question of Paris, as the road thither lay through Moulins; so my father decided on Lyons, and started immediately in a light cart with one of his tenants, Alix, sitting beside him. They came to the little town of Varennes at nightfall, and as feeling ran very high there my father lay down in the cart, and M. Alix, covering him with his cloak and sitting a little forward, was able to hide him completely from inquisitive eyes.

Alix alone was visible; he replied freely to all questions put to him, and as people were used to see him coming and going at all hours on his own business he was not interfered with.

My father arrived safely at the house of the same Noailly whose life he had shortly before saved, and was welcomed with the gratitude which was his due, but which one does not always meet with. We joined him the next day, and feeling that we might compromise Noailly by staying longer, we went on at once to Roanne, where my father was obliged to wait for some important papers which in the hurry of his flight had been left behind. This delay was rather dangerous, as we were still so near Moulins, but we did not know where to go: the troubles breaking out on every side of us made my father hesitate in which direction to turn, feeling as he did that our every chance of safety depended on his decision. The general excitement was fast increasing: tragic events were daily taking place, blood had flowed in Paris, and distant threatening rumours reached us without telling us anything decisive. There was danger all about us; the storm was already moaning over our heads, and the earth under our feet was a-tremble. How could we escape from it?

My father had no sooner arrived at Roanne than several officers of the Penthièvre Regiment, in garrison there, came to see him and to talk over the sad times; no one could think of anything but the misfortunes of the moment, and those that the future held in store. Many regiments had already massacred their officers, and our friends foresaw the same fate for themselves.

"The new ideas undermine all discipline," said one of them, M. de Nétancourt. "We are no longer obeyed by our men, and there is no safety for us but at Coblentz."

Thus they felt themselves forced into emigration.

At last the events of the 10th August resounded through France. The famous Challier, on his way

had made their acquaintance, were with us when their unfortunate comrades passed the house escorted by their own rebellious troops. They lamented over their friends in the Royal Polish, and, foreseeing the same fate for themselves, they determined not to wait for it, but to emigrate at once.

However, it was necessary to decide what we were to do. My father, in great uncertainty, resolved to seek out the son of M. Noailly, and to ask his advice, hoping to find in him some share of his father's good-will and gratitude. He was not disappointed; M. Noailly met him most warmly and took pains to show his interest in us; he lived himself in the suburb of Vaise, and immediately proposed that we should move thither. Each suburb, he explained, had its own municipality, and that of Vaise was composed of very worthy people; at M. Noailly's request, my father was permitted to take up his residence there, and thus we eluded the order to leave Lyons. We travelled no further than to the suburb, where we found pleasant rooms in the house of a M. Sériziot, a rich corn merchant, furnishing them ourselves in haste, and hurrying into them so as to escape from the surveillance that pryed into every movement of strangers. M. Noailly and his wife, a pretty and amiable young woman, were pleasant society for my father and aunt, who often spent the evening at their house, and it was there that we made the acquaintance of Madame Guichard, whose friendship became afterwards one of the blessings that we owed to our misfortunes. We lived so near them, we were ourselves so isolated, and their welcome was so hearty, that an intimacy rapidly grew up that was later to prove a very happy one for us.

M. Guichard's house was just opposite ours, and often in the evenings, when our elders were talking over the news of the day, I ran about the large garden with Annette, Madame Guichard's little daughter, who was about my own age. On the 9th of September, the weather being very fine, we went into the garden

a little earlier than usual, and were skipping under the trees when our game was suddenly interrupted by savage yells and the noise of a great mob which terrified us exceedingly. M. Guichard and my father climbed the rocks which closed in the far end of the garden to see what could be happening so near us. They came down again presently, trembling with horror; the prisoners confined at Pierre-Cise were being butchered.

Pierre-Cise was a fortress and state prison built on an isolated rock of considerable height (which has since been blown up); the officers of the Royal Polish had been taken thither, and it was they whom the people now demanded with such a furious clamour. It has been said since that the mayor of Lyons had received an order to set them at liberty *two days before this*, but that he considered their death necessary to the Revolutionary cause! It is useless to argue the point, as I shall confine myself to repeating only what I have heard said by M. de Bellecise himself, who was then governor of the prison.

M. Vitel, mayor of Lyons, at this dreadful time had gone, it appears, in the morning to M. de Bellecise to warn him of the excitement amongst the people, and he added that he feared there would be an attempt to tear the prisoners from their refuge. M. de Bellecise, being crippled with gout, had himself immediately carried into every part of the castle that could be defended, and assured M. Vitel that with a few more cannon and a reinforcement for his garrison, he would answer for the safety both of the fortress and his prisoners. The mayor promised both—and sent neither. In the afternoon the populace (the Marseillais had delayed their departure from Paris in order to share in these doings) gathered under the walls of Pierre-Cise in an immense crowd, shouting, cursing, yelling, demanding that the gates should be opened, and threatening to climb the walls. They swarmed up the stair cut in the rock, howling for the keys, and

swearing that if they did not get them they would smash the doors. M. de Bellecise, lacking the means of defence, was overwhelmed with the danger of his position, unable even to walk. Knowing well what he had to fear from a violence he could not hold in check, the unhappy old man, broken by age and pain, dared not face the people. It was his daughter that answered their demands.

Mademoiselle de Bellecise appeared before them alone, and declared in a loud and firm voice that she could only give the keys to the proper authority. The silence that had fallen on the crowd as they listened to her words was prolonged in amazement at the courage of this young and helpless girl; but the cries for the keys were renewed, and she then came forward with them to the mayor, who was present in person. They fell to the ground, and it was she who picked them up with complete self-possession; then placing them in the hands of M. Vitel, she reminded him of the duties they represented, of the sacredness of the trust she thus placed in his charge, of the protection he owed to the unhappy prisoners in his keeping. . . . Did he ever remember, one wonders, what she said? . . . He had himself only a few hours before locked the unfortunate men, whose lives the mob clamoured for, all together in one cell, under pretext that they would be the more easily guarded; he had himself turned the key upon the nine victims that Challier had already promised to his followers, and now the bloodthirsty mob was demanding them!

No sooner were the keys of the castle in M. Vitel's hands than the doors were flung open, and the crowd swept in on the heels of the obliging mayor like a torrent of lava carrying in its passage destruction and death. They easily found their victims, who had, as it were, been set ready for them; one alone escaped, M. des Plantes, who, with a forewarning of the fate that awaited them, had contrived to jump out of the window, and fell into a small yard which for

many years had been given up to a madman, himself a prisoner in Bellecise. This poor creature, reasonable for once, hid him in a sewer, closing the mouth of it with a great stone, and went on with his usual antics. The crowd glanced at him in passing, and paid him no further attention; but the other unhappy officers were dragged out of the prison, literally torn to pieces, and horribly murdered. Some fell on the steps leading down from Bellecise; others, less fortunate, only received the finishing blow on the Place des Terreaux. One poor fellow had at first been overlooked by the mob, which rushed off with the rest of its victims and left him behind; a faithful servant begged him to fly at once, "for they will come back." "No, they did not find me before; I am best here," was his reply. In a fresh wave the crowd surged back, seized on him, and dragged him away.

Mademoiselle de Bellecise was the heroine of the day. She could not save the victims who had been marked for the slaughter by a powerful hand, but she interceded for them with prayers and supplications. She was wounded in the foot by a pike, but paused only to knot her handkerchief round it; she thrust herself everywhere in despairing efforts to save or protect the prisoners. It is amazing that she was not murdered along with them; and, in fact, at one time, jammed into a narrow passage where she could neither move back nor forward, she overheard a deliberation as to whether she should not be knocked on the head at once to be rid of her importunities; as it was, she did not escape scot free, but had two ribs broken by a blow from the butt-end of a soldier's musket. It is even said that the mayor's fist expressed his opinion of her zeal. . . . Félicité de Bellecise suffered long from the effects of this terrible day, when she was uplifted above all thought of herself and her own safety.

She and her family passed the remainder of the day in a state of feeling that is indescribable. The castle

had been broken open and pillaged, and was no longer a safe refuge for any one, as those who had sacked it might return at any moment to seek for the one prisoner that had escaped them. It was only prudent to quit the melancholy place as quickly as might be; so, as the darkness alone had dispersed the last of the crowd, M. de Bellecise determined not to wait for daylight lest it should bring the mob back again. Towards midnight he abandoned the castle; with his wife on one side, and on the other a trusty servant, he crept silently down the steps that were still wet with the blood that had been spilt upon them. He had to be carried rather than supported by his wife and servant, and the way, badly lit by the lantern in his daughter's hand, was so slippery that it took long for the little party to reach the level ground. One can imagine the horrors of that slow descent through the darkness, the feeling underfoot of wet blood, the distant howling of the maddened crowd that the least impulse might bring back upon them without warning, —how every minute must have seemed an hour till they reached the foot of the rock and got into the carriage that was waiting for them, with M. des Plantes, who had followed them down, hidden under their skirts! The carriage started, but they had scarcely gone a few yards when they were stopped by a patrol. Madame de Bellecise showed herself at the window and gave her name, saying that she had now no home and must seek another. At the sound of her voice the soldier saluted respectfully. "Comrades, it is Madame de Bellecise," he said; and the answer was prompt, "Let her pass."[1] They arrived without further challenge at the refuge they had arranged in advance, foreseeing what sooner or later must happen.

[1] Mme. de Bellecise was greatly loved. When young she had been very beautiful, and she was still lovely in her old age, the kindness of her heart making a radiant sweetness about her—something almost angelically serene that commanded universal admiration and respect. All this dreadful day she had been with her husband, setting him an example of devotion and courage, and ready to die beside him.

M. des Plantes was transferred to a surer hiding-place, and, thanks to them, shortly after escaped from Lyons.

Next day Mademoiselle de Bellecise went to the Town Hall, and placing herself formally under the protection of the city, claimed support and assistance in recovering such objects belonging to her father as had been looted from Pierre-Cise, and permission to take away any such that still remained there. This was considered reasonable, and she was even given an escort to protect her; but what must it have cost her to traverse the crowd still massed in the Place des Terreaux, lingering there to share in the booty of the day before! The people made way for her, indeed, without direct insult, but they forced her to pass close by the bodies of their unfortunate victims as they lay naked, mutilated, literally *torn to pieces*, on the steps of the Town Hall. There were eleven of them, for besides the eight officers of the Royal Polish, three "refractory" priests who had refused the oath had been massacred at the same time, and their heads were carried about the streets on the points of pikes. But Mademoiselle de Bellecise had the strength of mind to hide her horror and emotion, and did not betray herself; and having succeeded in what she came for, she made haste to get away, going directly to the prison. There she took possession of everything belonging to her father that the mob had disdained, and as to the rest, some at least of the more valuable articles were afterwards discovered and returned to her by the police.

And we, what did we feel on that disastrous day of the 9th September? In the midst of the general alarm we had our own private anxieties, for Moulins was so near that we could easily be traced by those who had declared themselves our enemies, and who were furious that my father had escaped from them. We knew that inquiries had already been made as to whether we were living in Madame Guichard's house, and we

had heard whispered about us such ominous words as "aristocrat" and "suspicious strangers"; we had even received direct warning that my father was in danger. On this night we only dared to leave our kind neighbours very late, and even then silently and without a light, taking every precaution to be neither seen nor heard; nor did we attempt to sleep, for the rooms we lodged in had been formerly occupied by M. de la Barre, colonel of the Royal Polish, and it was quite possible that the mob might remember the fact and come to look for him. Restless with anxiety, my father was pacing up and down the room, when the door was suddenly thrown open and a woman burst in upon us; she had a dark lantern in her hand, her hair hung upon her shoulders, and her clothes were in great disorder. I remember that in her distress and despair she was very beautiful. It was only on looking at her again that we recognised her; it was Madame Tournouer, whose husband sent in our meals, and who, living at the foot of Pierre-Cise, had been in the habit of selling food to the prisoners. She had seen everything that had happened, and her face was still stamped with the day's horror; some of the poor men had actually been murdered under her eyes. It was the hope of saving another, M. de la Barre, that brought her to us at midnight.

"And you too," she added to my father. "You are in danger. I heard your name mentioned, and they are going to look for you; but before you fly help me to save M. de la Barre."

"But what can I do, being myself a stranger and a 'suspect'?"

"You have great influence with Barré," she replied. "When you saved Noailly's life you gained Barré's complete devotion, and he is a very strong man, and if he chooses can easily save M. de la Barre."

(He was more than a strong man, he was a very worthy one. When my father, at his own risk, sent Noailly home safe to his family, he confided him to

Barré's charge in his secret departure from the prison.)

Barré was called and the matter laid before him; it amounted to this, that he was actually invited to risk his life for a stranger. But he did not hesitate; he started at once, engaging on his way a trusty boatman; he went down the Saône as far as the Port de la Pêcherie, reached the Place des Terreaux at a run, and got into the Hotel de Milan by a back door at the very moment when the crowd in front were shouting, "Give us de la Barre's head! Where is de la Barre?"

He himself, believing every door to be guarded and no escape possible, had made up his mind to face death, when Barré came to save him from it. He was half dragged, half carried to the boat, and thrust into it; Barré threw in after him a uniform of the National Guard, and with a vigorous shove, sent the little vessel out into the quiet waters as if giving into their charge the life that he had just saved. Protected by the darkness, it floated gently down the middle of the Saône, and at last safely "took the land" at a place some three miles out of town, where Barré had a friend, who was to receive for the present this sacred charge.

In the meanwhile, no sooner had Barré left us than Madame Tournouer turned to my father.

"Besides your own private difficulties," she said, "there are others; for instance, the mob, disappointed yonder, may very well come here to look for M. de la Barre, and they would certainly sacrifice you in his place. You must hide at once, so follow me."

She spoke with an authority that was extraordinary, and my father went away with her without uttering a single objection. We knew later that he left the suburb of Vaise at once.

We remained behind in a state of mind easier to imagine than describe, in terrible distress about my father, and thinking, at every sound, that the mob was upon us. We had only one brighter moment, when

Barré returned and told us that he had saved De la Barre's life, but considered it such a simple matter that he could not understand why we admired him!

My aunt in particular passed a miserable night, for she had, as we all had, many and great anxieties, and had also, what we had not, the responsibility of deciding on what we were to do, a serious and difficult task at such a moment. Indeed, it was barely day when our hostess entered our room, and informed my aunt forcibly and curtly that she was to quit the house on the instant.

"But, Madame," my aunt replied in surprise, "you cannot turn me out like this. I took these rooms for a certain time, which is not yet at an end. I have therefore a right to remain here."

"You may say what you like," was the answer. "It makes no difference to me. You are strangers here, and it is said you are aristocrats; that is quite sufficient to bring the mob to my house, which would be pillaged and ruined. You will not only clear out on the spot, but I insist that you will leave behind you no trace of your stay here."

"But, Madame," my poor aunt protested again, "where can we go, since we know no one here?"

"Where you like; it is all the same to me."

There was nothing for it but to submit, and in less than half-an-hour all was in disorder, the beds taken to pieces, as if the house were and had been uninhabited, and not even a pin left lying about.

"For the Marseillais leave the city this evening," said the amiable Madame Sériziot, "on their way to Paris, and they will pass in front of my house. I am determined that there shall be nothing to make them suspect that I give shelter to aristocrats."

These words decided us to go without delay to Madame Noailly to ask her advice and help, hoping she would enable us to rejoin my father; but it appeared she did not know where he was, save that he had gone a considerable distance away. Nor did she even know

where her own husband was, and her uneasiness about him was great; in fact, we were as much of a burden to her as we were to ourselves.

"At any rate," she said at last, "I can offer you the half of a room that my father keeps for his own use in a little house in the country, rather more than a mile from here. We come and go there so often that your arrival will not be noticed. You will be uncomfortable there, but I think you will at least be safe."

My aunt gladly accepted the proposal, as the great thing was to find an immediate shelter; and having gone back to fetch the few indispensable things that we had left ready in our lodgings, we took our last leave of Madame Sériziot.

My aunt walked with Saint-Jean, our servant, leaning on his arm, and giving him the package she had made up to carry for her. We had each of us gathered together what we required to take with us. I was very proud of my foresight and careful selection, and while I was flattering myself to my own satisfaction, my poor aunt was worn out with heat and fatigue, for she was a bad and unaccustomed walker. Very stout, with exceedingly small feet and enormously high heels, unused to take this sort of exercise, she suffered greatly in the short distance, which seemed so long to her, and which the hot sunshine made all the more fatiguing. As soon as we had arrived she wished to change her clothes, and opened her package. "There, look!" she said to me, laughing, "see how wise I have been!" She had put in nothing but lace caps! How proud I was when I pulled out of the pockets of my apron all that she needed for the moment. I felt myself quite a person of discretion, and indeed I was very happy to have given this little pleasure to my good aunt.

Our dinner was sad, our supper still more melancholy; and Madame Noailly, when she joined us, brought us no news. Utter uncertainty seemed to lie over Lyons. The Marseillais were to start that evening,—

but would they really go? . . . Worn out with our fears and the vague terrors about us, we threw ourselves fully dressed on the two beds that were in the room, and waited for what should happen. The house, though some distance from the road, was by police orders lit up during the night; this, by drawing attention to us, greatly increased our danger, but we had to obey. Presently a terrible clamour warned us that these bloodthirsty troops were quitting the city; it was as if she vomited them forth in a torrent of blood and filth. They were drunken with excess, and mad with the cannibal joy of killing; they had tasted blood, and it had made them tigers. They came by the very foot of the little hill on which our house stood, yelling their ferocious songs, and passing on into the distance.

So many alarms had utterly exhausted us; we fell asleep in the midst of our anxieties, only to be awakened by piercing cries. Believing that our last hour had come, we looked round for our murderers, and breathed one prayer to God: it was only one of the little Noaillys who had fallen out of the big bed where she was sleeping beside her mother. We could still hear in the distance the song of the Marseillais, but as soon as it had died away, Madame Noailly sent into the Vaise suburb to know if anything had happened, and to find out what had become of our servants. The messenger soon came back with our man, Brugnon, who had sought refuge with a worthy tailor; while a fruit-seller had taken pity on Cantat, my aunt's maid. Turned out, like ourselves, by Madame Sériziot, they had been lucky to find such hospitality. It seemed that the night had been very unquiet, and fresh massacres were expected: no one had dared to go to bed. But the soldiers had been content with making a commotion, and now that they were away it was hoped there might be some return of tranquillity. Indeed, a certain amount of order was already re-established; but our anxieties were not lessened, for we were in a posi-

tion that demanded the greatest prudence, being strangers, looked on with suspicion, and without a home. We discussed our plans, and when our arrangements were made, we set out at nightfall in Mme. Noailly's carriage, she, with her children and their nurse, sitting well forward and hiding us from sight. In this way we crossed the Vaise suburb without being recognised, and arrived at the inn kept by Mme. Noailly's father. We drove into the yard, and when the gates had closed behind our carriage we got out, and were led to a quiet back-room where presently Cantat rejoined us, delighted to be with her mistress again, but much shaken with the excitement of the past night. Then we went to bed, saying to ourselves, "What shall we do to-morrow?"

For the shelter that had been given to us lasted no longer.

CHAPTER V

My father rejoins us—My friends, the de Piolenc—We stay in town—My younger brother comes back to France and visits us at Lyons—The 29th May 1793.

NEXT day we were made very happy by my father rejoining us; he arrived quite unexpectedly, and it can be imagined how much we had to tell each other. He had been a considerable distance away at the house of some peasants, where he found many other fugitives like himself; indeed, it was said that over 10,000 people had left the town and taken refuge where they could. The Guichard family had passed the night in a wood, along with many others. My father returned to Lyons with some of his new acquaintances, and was given a lodging for the second night at the house of a lady who had till now been a perfect stranger to him.

"And now," my aunt inquired, "what are we to do?"

"I can only tell you as far ahead as dinner time!" was my father's reply: "for we are to dine with M. Coste. The demoiselles de Piolenc leave to-night for Chambéry, and we shall say good-bye to them." So we started for our visit with an assured future of only a few hours before us!

These young friends of mine, of whom my father spoke, had been in a convent at Moulins; but when the religious houses were broken into and destroyed, and the worthy sisters attached to them were turned out of doors, their pupils had to be sent home to their parents. The young de Piolenc had been awaiting, in the care of M. Coste, the arrival of their father's man of business to escort them to him at Chambéry. Like

myself, they were destined to suffer greatly; but with the confidence of childhood they looked forward to the future without fear, and though we were only to meet again after long years of misfortune, we parted as if we were separating but for a few weeks, promising to write to each other often and regularly. They had barely reached Chambéry when it was taken by the French, and they were forced to fly along with their father, to share henceforward all the miseries and privations of the poor *emigrés*. Whereas it was my fate to stay in my own country in the midst of the terrors that distressed it! Farewell, Désirée and Agathe! with you I lost the last vestiges of my childhood.

After my friends were gone we were allowed to occupy the garret in which they had slept, while my father went back to the house where he had lodged the night before. We were indeed thankful to feel that another night was thus provided for; and most grateful that M. Coste, who was far from rich himself, yet had pity on our homelessness and did not turn us out. What a difference between him and Madame Sériziot! The next day my father sought a lodging for us where we should not be incontinently denounced to the police; and at last found what we needed in the house of M. Mazuyer, where we hoped to tide over the next few days, by which time things might have quieted again and we have settled our plans. Thus we passed the fourth night of our wanderings in the room[1] he had ceded to us, happy to think that we had not to seek a new shelter in the morning.

Shortly after, my father went to the headquarters of the section to make his declaration of residence, giving only his family name, Giraud, by which alone we were to be known henceforward in Lyons. There

[1] There was but one bedroom, with a huge bed in which I slept with my aunt; a little bed with curtains was put in a corner of the same room for my father. These details are necessary for what follows later.

were so many of this name in the city that it drew no attention to us: so that we were left undisturbed and unrecognised for some time.

The house in which we lived was the former[1] Hotel des Douanes, and most of the officials still lodged there, the new building on the Quai du Rhône not being finished. M. Mazuyer was inspector of customs: M. de Souligné, the chief, lived also in the house, as did M. Vignon, under-inspector: indeed it was to M. Vignon's rooms that the Bellecise family had retired after leaving the fortress. Thus we enjoyed a society that was both pleasant and *safe*, a matter of the very greatest importance in those days; and sympathising as we did with each other, we spent the evening together, sharing all our hopes and fears, happy in being able to speak freely and without restraint. We seldom talked of anything save public events and the news of the day: sometimes I forgot both in chattering to Sophie de Souligné, who was nearly of my own age, but we were soon recalled to seriousness by the gravity of our elders.

Thus the winter passed away in the midst of anxiety and trouble, which culminated at last in the death of the king: the town lay, as it were, under a veil of mourning, the streets were empty and silent, and the houses closed as if each had lost its head and master. Our little company spent the day in tears, wondering what, after this, we might dare to hope *our* fate would be. For how can I describe the Terror, what brush could paint it? It reached to the most secret hiding-places, it knocked at every door, no refuge was safe from it; it was made up of all the fear, the solicitude, the actual misery of the moment, the expectation of worse, of all the anxiety and distress the heart of man could contain. The domiciliary visits, which had become more and more general and frequent, took away all privacy from the citizens: this new species

[1] "Customs House," though a literal, would be an incorrect rendering; we have no equivalent.—*Translator's note.*

of torture, which threw open our houses at any and every hour, scarcely gave us leave to weep unseen. For it was above all at night that these terrible visits were made; at night, when the darkness increased the sense of loneliness, and doubled the terror. We were awakened by the cries of the sentinels calling from post to post as they were stationed in the narrow street; then there came a loud and angry knocking at the door. If not opened at once, the commissaries flew into a rage of impatience and abuse, and their shouts mingled with the echoing call of the soldiers. What nights of horror, when almost the worst of all our trials was the utter uncertainty as to what might happen; we did not even know whether to get up to receive these visits or to remain in bed,—the one looked too anxious, the other too unconcerned, and *both* were suspicious!

Besides these causes for alarm, there were others which at the time we only understood imperfectly. It was said that the Jacobins had made terrible plans, that in their secret assemblies they were plotting to ruin Lyons and to murder the more respectable citizens. In order to get such information as was possible, Brugnon went daily to the club; the Jacobins came to look on him as one of their party and often gave him pamphlets to distribute, but he was never allowed to be present at any of their mysterious meetings. All that we gained from him was a knowledge of their bloodthirsty oratory; our worthy fellow had a perfect memory and great powers of imitation, and repeated to us most faithfully the fiery discourses he had heard. We listened with great interest, and in spite of the serious dangers which gathered about us we did not overlook the comic element; for many of these evilly inspired orators had risen from a very low station in life, and ignorant both as to facts and language, filled their harangues with statements so extraordinary and such ridiculous figures of rhetoric that it was impossible not to laugh. But the death of the king marked the

beginning of an era of blood. The Jacobins' meetings became more frequent, they displayed an extraordinary activity, and in spite of the mystery with which they surrounded themselves, rumours of their intentions circulated on every side. We felt ourselves hard pressed by an invisible enemy, and even the bravest were made to tremble. At last it became known that they were arranging for the murder of a large number of the citizens; and immediately the Lyonnais rose up in their own defence. The 29th May 1793 was for them the beginning of a crusade in which they fought for life and liberty.

I cannot undertake to give a complete account of this day, become so famous in the history of Lyons; I was only a young and inexperienced witness, who saw the effects without understanding the causes, and I can but repeat that which I myself saw or heard.

It was said that Challier, who for many months had been working up the popular excitement, thought that the time had come for the execution of his plan, and had communicated it to his comrades and followers. His intention was nothing less than to seize the town; to raise the guillotine on the Place Morant; to command the place from either end by cannon, and there to execute the "enemies of the people," throwing the remains into the Rhône. Death and burial at once! The list of "enemies of the people" contained the names of all such as were vaguely classed as aristocrats or moderates; rich men, men who were strictly neuter in their opinions, those who favoured religion, relations of *emigrés*, all without exception were condemned to death.

"The revolutionary axe must strike," they declared, "until the town is reduced to a handful of selected men, entirely devoted to the interests of the Republic, and worthy of carrying out the regeneration of Lyons!"

The comrades and followers having responded to

this appeal as was expected of them, the day was fixed for carrying out the plot, and the most fearful oaths of secrecy were sworn by all the members of the assembly, before they separated to prepare for the work of iniquity to which they gave so fine a name. What a mockery, to commit murder in the name of all the virtues! However, one among these "comrades and followers" was suddenly seized with horror at the misfortunes he was helping to prepare, and revealed the plot; the "sections"[1] were called out, established on a permanent footing, chose their own provisory officers, and marched against the Town Hall, on the 29th May 1793.

Here the municipality, entirely composed of Jacobins, had taken refuge, along with the principal leaders of the party; batteries of artillery had been placed wherever any streets opened into the Place des Terreaux, in order to defend its approaches. Thus as the sections advanced in close columns along the narrow and winding streets that led towards the Town Hall, they were exposed to a heavy fire from the cannon in front of them, and also lost many men by the random firing from roofs and windows, which seldom failed to find a victim. Women followed close on their heels like wolves that devour dead bodies on the battlefield; these creatures, monsters worthy of their husbands, fell upon the wounded and despatched them with a cruelty that is indescribable.[2]

The body of men that advanced along the Quai du Rhône suffered particularly, being under fire from the batteries the whole way.

All day long the struggle continued with intense bitterness; for the stake was life and liberty! But, at last, about six o'clock in the evening, the section of

[1] An armed local defence, or city militia.—*Trans.*

[2] One young man, seeing a friend fall at his side, took him upon his shoulders rather than leave him to the outrages of the mob. This was perceived by one of the women; furious that a wounded man should escape her, she ripped open with her dagger the stomach of the man who carried him and then finished them both.

the Temple, composed of strong and determined men, rushed upon and overcame a battery before it had time to reload, and this turned the scale in the favour of honesty and respectability. The Town Hall was taken, and M. Madinier, captain of the Lyonnais, rode on horseback up the steps, the reins in his teeth, and a pistol in either hand. Inside were found the bodies of the prisoners (taken by the Jacobins), who had been massacred and outrageously mutilated; while the Jacobin leaders, Bertrand (the mayor), Challier, Carteron, Rouleau, and many others, were arrested and taken to the Arsenal, and put into the keeping of M. de Guériot, who was in command there. Next day, however, he was relieved of this dangerous charge, and they were transferred to Roanne, the city prison.

The citizens at once elected the necessary authorities, and re-established order and tranquillity; the fruit of their victory was a liberty not to be found anywhere else in France, and many people came from other districts to seek a refuge from the persecutions that were now general. Shortly after, Challier was tried, found guilty, and condemned to death. There was not one doubtful point in the case against him, every crime was proved; no other sentence could have been pronounced. He refused an advocate, undertook his own defence and seemed quite unmoved, insisting on walking to the place of execution; I saw him as he passed, refusing, it appeared, to listen to the priest who walked beside him, his sallow bald head easily distinguishable in the middle of the troops that guarded him. He died as he had lived, but suffered much from the unskilfulness of the executioner, who had as yet little experience with the guillotine. The knife was let fall three times before it killed him. This was his will :—" I give my soul to God, my heart to all patriots, and my body to the wicked."

Riard de Beauvernois, a degenerate noble whom he had enrolled among his sanguinary followers, was also

tried and condemned; he was executed three days later, and showed much less courage than Challier. These two criminals were looked upon by the Jacobins as martyrs; they swore they would avenge their death, and they kept their word.

Sometime before the 29th of May, indeed about the end of the preceding December, my father had heard of the arrival of Chambolle, his younger son, at Paris. It is only those who have lived through such times that can realise the terror that this caused us; the return of an *emigré* to France meant a return to almost certain death. After some fighting, which took place, I believe, near Liège, Condé's army had been disbanded; the *emigrés* were thrown on their own resources, and many of them made use of their education or special talents to gain a worthy livelihood. They went to Germany, to Holland, indeed to every part of Europe, and everywhere they met with a welcome and the hospitality they deserved. Chambolle found himself alone, separated from his friends, not even knowing where his brother was; he longed to see us again, and unlike his comrades, who fled from the Republican troops, he tranquilly awaited their arrival. He had taken off his uniform, and gave himself out to be the servant of an *emigré*, who desired to return to his own country. The Republicans good-naturedly took an interest in the lad, who was little more than a child, scarcely sixteen years old; they allowed him to pass, and by the means of the story he had invented, he got safely through the army. As one can imagine, it was not done without danger; but some kind-hearted persons who suspected his secret helped him on his way. Providence led him to make friends with a worthy carter, who gave him a blouse, a whip, and set him to drive his horses; in this manner he passed the frontier, while the bales and bundles in the carts he drove were torn open, or pierced with bayonets to find the *emigrés* who might be hidden therein. He had many such perils to pass through before he reached

Paris, with his extreme youth in his favour and thirty *sous* in his pocket for all his fortune!

He took a lodging in a low drinking-house, whose proprietor worked in the quarries; his poverty obliged him to seek work there also in order to pay for his living, while he waited for a reply to the letter he had written to my father. This reply he never received. Astonished and distressed by such a silence, he wrote to an old family friend, begging that she would send him news, and let us know where he was; but as he got no reply to this letter either, he thought us all dead. He was overcome with distress, and his situation became daily more difficult and dangerous. It was noticed that his skin was too delicate for one who had been born to such work; and the little daughter of the house declared that "he looked like an aristocrat." The lightest word, the smallest indiscretion, would have certainly ruined him, and, losing heart and courage, he made up his mind once more to cross the frontier. In order to pay his host, he was forced to sell everything that he could spare; and on coming back from the pawn-shop, he happened to pass by a little chapel dedicated to the Virgin, now abandoned, and in part destroyed. He went into the midst of the ruins, and overwhelmed by his loneliness, prayed for help and comfort; in the intensity of his appeal, it seemed to him as if the burden fell from him, and he rose up with a recovered sense of hope and consolation. No sooner was he home than he paid his bill, explaining that he was going away, when the little daughter suddenly cried out, "Mamma, you have forgotten to give him the letter that has come for him." At these words my brother, who had believed himself wholly abandoned and alone, felt as if he had wakened to a new life. The letter was from Madame Lavenier, the friend to whom he had himself written; she related to him, cautiously and in guarded words, our misfortunes and our flight, and gave him the address of a notary, through whom she was sending him some

money, to serve until he could hear from his father. She had also, as she explained, given the same address to his father, so that they could safely communicate with each other. She herself had been forced to leave Moulins, and this had been the cause of her delay in replying.

Not long after this my father desired him to rejoin us at Lyons, travelling thither by way of Burgundy, so as to avoid the Bourbonnais; but this route being shorter, he took it, in spite of the danger to himself in traversing a province where he was so well known. He left Paris on the very day of the king's death. A great part of the way he walked, in order that he might enter the towns unremarked on foot, as if he belonged to the neighbourhood; and when he arrived at Moulins, he contrived to secretly visit some old friends, and to take a last farewell of his father's house. Then he went on to Toulon, a village some little distance outside of the town, where he passed the night. He was recognised by his hostess, who had once been cook in our service; but Gilberte kept his secret, and sent him on in a postchaise, so that he might the sooner get out of a district in which any delay was so dangerous. Very luckily for my brother, he was not known to the driver of the chaise, who was a red-hot revolutionary.

"To whom does that place belong?" Chambolle asked, as, in passing Écherolles, the house became distinctly visible through the trees.

"To Giraud des Écherolles," replied the driver, "a villainous aristo, an enemy of the people! His rascals of sons have emigrated; if we only had them here, all three, wouldn't we make them dance!"

This style of conversation was not very agreeable to my brother, who nevertheless got safely through the district, though he heard later that he had been recognised by two persons, who were too honourable to denounce him.

My aunt and I were sitting quietly by the fire one day when a note arrived from Chambolle telling us of

his arrival in Lyons. He had not dared to come direct to us, but he wrote that he would go that evening to the Place de la Douane, where he hoped we would meet him. As soon as my aunt had read this she sent me to fetch my father, who had gone out for the evening; and when I had explained what was wanted of him, he went straight to the inn from which Chambolle wrote, asking for the young servant who had arrived there the night before, and was looking for a place. But he had gone out, so my father left a note telling him what he was to do. In the meantime I had been walking up and down the Place de la Douane, closely observing all who passed by, but I had seen nothing of Chambolle; and as the hours went on, we began to ask ourselves what had happened to him? At last, about ten o'clock, we heard a step on the stair, and the door was gently pushed open. It was Chambolle, but how changed since I had last seen him!

"Where have you been?" my father asked.

"At the theatre," he replied.

"At the theatre! And why there?" rejoined my father in some anger.

"I was afraid to come here, and I thought I might see you there. I have been looking for you everywhere!"

This answer soothed my father and lessened his surprise; for though we in our suspense would have had no heart for the theatre, my brother was so young, and already so much accustomed to danger, that he was much less concerned about himself than we were about him.

He spent three days and nights with us, a close prisoner, watched over with our tenderest care and deepest anxiety; for at that time an *emigré* was a terrible responsibility, bringing death, as it were, in his hand—death alike for himself and for all who had to do with him. M. Mazuyer relieved us at last by offering to employ him in his glassworks at Rive de Gier; and my father sent him there at once under an assumed

name. Shortly after this our valued friend, M. de Guériot, who was still in command of the town artillery, gave my brother an appointment as driver, with a commission to purchase iron and coal for the city arsenal. This gave him an excuse for staying at Rive de Gier; but he came no more to see us, in order to avoid the double danger of meeting any one who knew him, or of being recognised through his great resemblance to us.

CHAPTER VI

Siege of Lyons—My father refuses the command of the city, which is given to M. de Précy—Bombardment—Courage of Mdlle. de Bellecise—My father charged with the defence of the Sainte-Irenée Gate—Begging—Famine—The 29th September—M. de Précy's nephew—Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre—The city is taken.

SINCE the 29th May Lyons had enjoyed a liberty unknown in the rest of France; but as alone she had dared to rise up against the Jacobins and to throw off their yoke, alone, against so many enemies, she was again to fall. The reign of blood that ruled over our country demanded the death of all the chief citizens in payment for that of Challier; but instead of shamefully giving them up to such a fate, the Lyonnais determined to defend their comrades and made ready to do so. There was but one desire in every heart, to resist oppression, even at the sacrifice of all else.

I must repeat that I can only tell what I myself saw or heard, without attempting to thread the mazes of politics that were beyond my age and understanding. The only merit of my story is that it is true. I relate the effects, though I was ignorant of their causes. When one is young one lives in the present, without care for the future, without experience gained from the past; indeed, there are many men who in this remain children all their lives, and who are always carried away by the events of the moment, never learning wisdom from what they have come through.

When the Lyonnais decided to defend the city, they chose M. de Chenelette to command them, but he declined the post, which was then offered to my

father.[1] Three members of the provisional government were delegated to inform him that he was invited to accept this command, upon which the fate of the town was to depend; but my father, flattered though he was by so great an honour, at once declined it. It required a man of great and rapid decision to be capable of accomplishing an immense task in very few days, for it was no small matter to put the city into a fit state to stand the siege with which she was threatened; and my father, who was sixty-six years of age, and a stranger to the people of Lyons, felt that he could not sufficiently count upon their confidence and support. Moreover, being no longer able to ride on horseback, it was impossible for him to examine and move about the city and its environs with the necessary ease and speed. In declining the command, however, he offered his personal services in anything that he could undertake. The Council then nominated M. de Précy, and, as is well known, he accepted the post.

It may be wondered how my father, living in such retirement, had drawn upon himself sufficient notice to lead to his being offered such a responsible position. When the authorities at Moulins, regretting that they had let my father escape them, appealed to the Court of Cassation at Paris to reverse the judgment that had been given in his favour, the Court confirmed this judgment and addressed its decree on the subject direct to my father himself, who only by this means discovered what his enemies had set on foot against him. This packet coming from Paris, with its five big seals, and addressed to him with his full military grade, attracted attention. It was opened, and thus it became known that a retired major-general had come to Lyons to seek refuge from his persecutors. So great a number

[1] This circumstance, never having led to any result, is not much known. M. Fillot, a notary, was one of the party delegated to convey the invitation to my father. M. Fillot was afterwards a Justice of the Peace in the *Change* section.

of old military men had emigrated that no doubt there were but few left in the city; I think, indeed, that even M. de Précy did not ordinarily live there.

The greatest activity now reigned in the town and its vast suburbs. The Brotteaux was the exercise ground; here ditches were dug, and bastions were built, here bridge-heads were constructed by such as bore no arms; all, of any age and both sexes, took part in the labour. One M. Schmidt, a very clever man of his trade, undertook the casting of cannon[1] and mortars; merchants gave bales of wool and cotton to pile up in a sort of redoubt upon the Quai de Rhône; there was but one feeling, one desire in every heart,—to resist tyranny. The most delicate ladies were present at the firing practice, or at the trials of the new cannon; nothing seemed to alarm or disconcert them, or to turn them from their only preoccupation, the general defence. As to me, there was a great deal of curiosity mixed with my courage, though I shared the universal enthusiasm. My father took me everywhere, and I never in all my life learnt any lessons with the ardour I then spent on military matters, insisting on having everything explained to me; and I remembered all that I heard or was told so clearly, that I believe I could have passed an examination on the subject. The interest I took in it all engraved on my mind even the most technical words.

While the town was being fortified in haste, the army of the Convention was approaching. It had a strong party within the walls, composed of the mob, and of the large mass of workmen, chiefly weavers, who were unemployed—*canuts*, as they were called, in allusion to the *canettes*, or shuttles, that they used in weaving. These *canuts* actually outnumbered the respectable citizens, and had besides an advantage over them in their utter unscrupulousness. They had spies everywhere, even in the municipality; and in the

[1] After the 29th May the batteries of artillery had been removed to Grenoble.

Council itself there were traitors who worked in secret and by underhand means to overthrow any plan that was proposed in the defence of Lyons. M. de Précy, a stranger to the district, and surrounded by people whom he did not know, could not always distinguish between those of good and bad faith; moreover, false reports were often brought to him and led him sometimes into making decisions that were not good for the cause.[1] The *canuts*, a low and degraded class, had nothing to lose and all to gain in the general upheaval, consequently they were the obstinate enemies of every one who wished to restore order, and it was greatly owing to them that famine presently threatened the town. Secretly informed of the decisions of the Council, they betrayed them to the besiegers, and by this means repeatedly caused measures to fail that had seemed the most likely of success. The army that besieged us was in fact less dangerous to the town than the crowd of enemies within it, who were day and night busy in concocting new treacheries.

The number of our actual fighting men was only, it appeared, six thousand; the remainder, whether timid or untrustworthy, or paid for their services, were not to be relied on. There was a body of cavalry made up of young men rich enough to provide their own equipments; the greater number, having no uniform, wore their summer clothes, which led the besiegers to call them in mockery "cotton" or "nankin" soldiers.

The town was now practically surrounded, and the attack began in earnest. I think it was on the 8th or 9th of the month of August 1793 that the first bombs were discharged against us. I could not sleep during the first night of the bombardment, and in fact, for several nights following this, fear and curiosity kept us all awake; and several of our friends came to pass the

[1] M. de Précy, who gave my father a seat in the Council, came several times to our house. I remember that he looked hale and robust, his complexion was much tanned, and his teeth exceedingly white, which made him remarkable.

night in our room, it being considered the safest in the house. We were a singular little company, every now and then creeping cautiously to the window to peer out, only to retreat in alarm when a bomb near by burst with a clap of thunder. If only they had not brought death with them, how beautiful they would have been! I have passed hours at the window watching their flickering stars describe a great curve in the sky, whistling as they came nearer, and then bursting magnificently; it was very fine and very terrible. I remember also that there was a M. Berthelier who came to take refuge in our room, and who was as curious as I, but more nervous; he would creep very gently to the window, walking on tiptoe as if afraid of waking the bomb, would lift the corner of the muslin curtain to peep out, and when the bomb fell would drop the curtain and hide behind the thin veil of muslin as if it had been a buckler. His timidity greatly amused me, and in laughing at him I forgot to be frightened.

The bombardment meanwhile was continued with great vigour. The arsenal was set on fire by the Jacobins, as it was said; the besiegers immediately directed their bombs against it. It was impossible to do anything; the explosion when it came was terrible —the whole sky seeming as if it were on fire, and the light from it so strong that we thought the fire must be close to us or even in our own house. My anxiety was very great, especially on account of my father, who was in bed; knowing that he would presently be appointed to some onerous post, he took in the meantime all the rest he could. I woke him several times.

"Father, wake up!"

"What is the matter, my child?"

"The bombs, father! They might fall here, and you would be killed in your bed!"

"None will fall here, my dear child." And he fell asleep at once, more soundly than ever. I could not

understand how he was so untroubled by the noise like thunder about us, and the constant danger and alarms. I learnt better in time, but at that moment his calmness was so much at variance with our excitement, that in my imagination it seemed to increase his danger in setting him, as it were, apart from and above the rest of us. Presently I began to alarm myself about the fire, and was almost glad to have a reasonable excuse to wake him again. I went and called him as loudly as I could.

"Father, it is on fire! Get up, it is on fire!"

"Ah, well," he answered sleepily, "where is it?"

"Near, quite near to us. Just look at the sky!"

He got up at once, and, child that I was, I was quite happy to see him leave the bed where it seemed to me a bomb might kill him more easily than anywhere else. What a difference between the phlegm of an old soldier and the timorousness of an ignorant little girl! I was easier in my mind when once I saw him up and moving, even though he was actually exposed to greater danger.

He went out, but shortly after came back to us to tell us that the arsenal was on fire. The flames were so violent that, far off as it was, one might have thought it close at hand; and there were besides several other fires on the opposite bank of the Saône. I went down to the river with my father, and from the rocks left uncovered by the very low water the spectacle was superb. The arsenal, and more than three hundred houses, made one huge brasier from which long tongues of flame darted out, licking up, as it were, life itself, possessions, hopes, homes, and reducing innumerable families to an equal misery. Rich and poor alike were driven to seek and share a refuge behind the earthwork at Perrache; the enemies' batteries were directed against the districts that had been set on fire, and it was impossible to attempt to check the flames. The suburb in which we lived being separated by both the Saône and Rhône from the departure point of the

bombs, they were in part spent before they reached us, though they nevertheless did great damage.

Mademoiselle de Bellecise (who has been mentioned before) had crossed the Place with us towards the Saône, but she soon observed that one of the fires on the other side of the river from us was in the Rue Grenette, where her sister lived, and where M. Milanis, her brother-in-law, had his large printing-office. "If the house be on fire," she said at once, "I ought to be there to help my sister, who is all alone with her children; her husband is at his post. Who knows what may not be happening to them?"

She started off without delay, but as soon as she reached the stone bridge she was stopped; no woman was permitted to go across. It was all very well to explain her reasons, the sentinel's orders did not permit of any such consideration and his orders were final. She immediately went home, dressed herself as a man, put her pistols into her belt, and once more started, this time by way of the Saint-Vincent Bridge.

"Where are you going?" she was asked.

"To my post," she replied boldly.

"What post?"

"The Croix Rousse."

"Pass to the Croix Rousse."

In spite of her pistols, her almost childlike appearance would at any other time have called suspicion on to her, but then, even boys were already bearing arms. When she arrived at her sister's, she found her busily attending to one of the workmen who had been wounded by a splinter of the bomb that had just set fire to the house; the crying children ran to meet their aunt, and she set to work to soothe and quiet them. She passed the rest of the night helping to get the better of the fire, and it was not till six in the morning, when all was once more comparatively tranquil, that she returned home to relate her nocturnal adventures to her old father and mother.

When this terrible night at last came to an end and

it was day, great barrels were brought into the streets and put before the houses, and orders were issued that they should be filled with water. There were only women available for the task; but we all, without exception, took our places in the chain; even my aunt would not be excused, and courage giving her strength, she worked as if she had been in the habit of handling buckets of water all her life.

When my father returned from the Council he told us that M. de Précy had put him in charge of the Sainte-Irenée Gate, situated on the suburb of Sainte-Foy. My aunt could not make up her mind to separate from him, so we went with him into lodgings that he found with difficulty, a great many of the citizens having removed to this quarter, which, built as it is upon a hill, offered by its height and its distance from the town proper a certain amount of security. The houses were crowded from cellar to garret, and indeed, for want of any other shelter, the crypt of Sainte-Irenée, which was once an asylum for persecuted Christians, now served as a refuge to all who could obtain no better. On this side the town was not surrounded, and we enjoyed a certain freedom; some of the nearer country-houses were still occupied, the peasants brought in vegetables and other produce, and at first the suburbs of Sainte-Irenée and St. Just were, in comparison to the city, well provisioned. But the number of those who came out to get away from the bombs increased so greatly that soon food became dear and difficult to obtain, and the poor could not afford to buy it; the distress increased till M. Moulin, the *curé* of Sainte-Irenée, decided to ask all strangers to contribute what they could towards buying food for those who could not buy it for themselves, since it was their presence in the quarter that made the supplies so insufficient. He asked my father to let me undertake this begging expedition, and when he consented, I joyfully found myself called upon to play an active part in our little history, which gave me great

importance in my own eyes. I was accompanied by Mademoiselle Sériziot (*not* the daughter of the Madame Sériziot who had turned us out!), whose mother lodged in the same house as we did; we started at once upon our rounds, with the escort of the old *curé*. It was no easy business to undertake such a thing at a time when every one's resources were threatening to fail; people were afraid to give away anything of the little that remained to them, and we were often ill-received, in spite of the persuasive eloquence of our good M. Moulin. His words were enough to melt any heart, and our purses were generally filled for us, but there were some who would listen to no appeals, and shut their ears to all entreaties.

We went everywhere; we omitted no place that was inhabited. We explored the crypts of Sainte-Irenée; we entered every cellar and every garret. I remember once we went into a sort of shed, but came out again at once, thinking it useless to ask for anything in such a miserable place. A woman, however, recognising us, followed us into the street and gave us an *assignat* for fifty sous, regretting that she could do no more, but wishing, she said, to contribute something to so good a cause. It was indeed the widow's mite.

We found a very different scene in a country-house which we visited. It was one of the best still occupied, and showed by its elegance that it belonged to rich people. We were shown into a cool and airy drawing-room; painted walls, fine engravings, and valuable furniture made the room both luxurious and charming. We explained our business to the lady who received us, and whose appearance was in keeping with her beautiful house; the *curé* added a few words of exhortation to our simple entreaties. "Monsieur," was the reply, "I am sorry, but I do not belong to your parish."

"Charity, Madame," he insisted gently, "in the midst of the troubles that have come upon us, charity knows no such narrow limits as those."

"I repeat, Monsieur, that I do not belong to this suburb, and am only living here for the moment."

"You come here," said M. Moulin firmly, "to seek a refuge from the dangers that threaten you elsewhere; you become therefore a resident of my parish. Will you not try to help us in our need, in exchange for the safety you find here?"

"Sir," rejoined the lady, very sharply, "I do a great deal for the poor, and give much money to those of my own parish: if I gave you any I should be depriving them." She bowed—very slightly! and going into the next room, shut the door upon us with a bang. We left the fine house feeling sore and hurt, and our thoughts turned kindly to the poor shed so full of misery.

Our rounds took us so near the enemy's posts that we were much exposed, and although in a measure protected by our own batteries, we were often within gun-shot. We saw many of the soldiers of the Convention looking out of the windows of houses that had fallen into their hands; nevertheless we went into every building that we could enter, for we were gleaning the harvest of the poor, and we would not lose, if we could help it, a single grain. The very next day our round would have been impossible; the besiegers were steadily gaining upon us, and death gleaned its harvest behind us, on the very roads that we had passed on the evening before in the company of our good *curé*. What became of the fine lady and her beautiful house? Perhaps the enemies of Lyons were no enemies of hers; or perhaps, like us, she fled back into the town to take her share of its miseries.

Our begging did not produce much in comparison with what was needed; nevertheless it provided food for the poorest and for the sick. The price of all provisions became exorbitant. The city, every day more effectually invested, saw its resources steadily diminish; we were obliged to do with the very least that was possible of everything. Our bread was

detestable, made with bad flour which must have been very unwholesome, and even this bread had to be baked in secret, for we dared not let others see that we still disposed of such luxuries. My father received a daily ration (for one person) of bread and meat, which formed the most substantial part of our household fare. We had but a very small room, which was at once our dining and drawing-room, and at night a bedroom for such as had nowhere else to go to. We spread mattresses on the ground for all who came, and every one was quite satisfied. Indeed, we had few needs; we were all so absorbed in the great events taking place about us that we thought but little of the luxuries of ordinary life, and our only preoccupations were to struggle against the peril that surrounded us and to defend ourselves to the end. How many young men have gone out from our little room, refreshed with a night's rest, only to meet with death!

The troops sent from the city to occupy St. Étienne and Montbrison were driven back upon the town; it was the beginning of worse misfortunes, and they made their entry in the midst of a sad silence. All who had gone out did not come home. Some ladies had followed their husbands, resolved to share their fate, and if need be die with them; amongst these was Madame Camille Jordan, riding alongside of her husband, whom she had not quitted during several serious encounters. All seemed oppressed by the thought of the gloomy future, and many regretted afterwards that they had not been killed in these early days. . . . A few prisoners followed them; I think the representative of the people, Javogue, was among them, at least I believe I saw him walking with his companions in misfortune, surrounded by their escort of infantry. I thought I also recognised my brother among the returning soldiers. I spoke of it to my father, who made inquiries at once, but could discover nothing, though shortly afterwards we learnt that Chambolle was

indeed in the city, where he had taken service in a "section" distant from the one we lived in, in order that we should not recognise him. My father, who knew very well that Lyons, abandoned to herself and without any outside help, must fall a victim to her noble resistance to the revolutionary powers,—my father, I repeat, convinced that we must fail, ordered his son at once to leave the city and to profit by the fact that the way was still open to him. My brother obeyed him, but with tears.

The return of the troops diminished the small store of food left to us. The poor Marquis de Pure, who for years had lived on nothing but milk, and was unable to take any other nourishment, could not keep his cow in safety from the famished people about him; she was seized and carried off, and I saw her master in terrible distress, begging to be allowed to keep her. What happened to him, or whether he managed to survive her loss, I do not know; I never saw him again. It has been said that the famine was not really caused by the want of provisions so much as by the manœuvres of evil-hearted men who, in order to help the besiegers, did all they could to increase the disorder and misery. I myself have seen signals which were intended to inform the enemy where the stores of food and fodder were to be found; lights were made to appear and disappear a certain number of times upon some elevated place, and immediately a shower of bombs was directed upon the quarter, the buildings were set on fire, and the supplies were destroyed. The police were never able to seize the traitors—they always escaped.

It is at such a time that one learns to realise what is absolutely necessary and what can be done without. Some ladies from Montbrison, fearing to fall into the hands of the Jacobins, had followed the Lyonnais troops when they returned to the town; some were on foot, some sat on the cannons, all cheerfully supporting fatigue and want rather than face the treat-

ment that awaited them from the enemy. They came in to share our fading hopes and our increasing fears; several lodged in our quarter wherever it was possible to find room, and every one gave them the very little each could spare. Some sent a piece of bread or a handful of flour, others a scrap of meat; others again gave them clothes. All we could offer was a bowl of white haricot beans.

The town had now nothing but her walls and the Rhône between herself and the enemy. On the 29th September the attack was general; I cannot attempt to describe the noise, tumult, and horror of that day. Our house, situated close to the Sainte-Irenée Gate, and the fight raging about it, was actually between three batteries, and the noise of the firing was incessant; the bullets of the enemy struck our windows, the cannon-balls roared over our heads. Nothing—no, nothing—is so terrible as to sit still in the midst of danger, or rather to be forced to inaction when all around is confusion and excitement, and everywhere is death. . . . We saw little of my father, who had enough to do in trying to put some courage into men who lay down on the ground to avoid the bullets whistling about them. The sight of the old soldier standing amongst them endeavouring to stir up some sense of honour in their hearts made no impression upon them; most were paid for their service, and considered that their wage was not worth dying for; others had sold themselves already to the enemy and did their best to promote disorder; and all, perhaps, felt that resistance was hopeless and that there was no use in continuing it.

All this time we awaited death, tortured by anxiety, unaware whether my father was still alive. It was terrible, and our imaginations made it seem yet more terrible; we could see from our windows one of the heights overlooking the town, we could watch the fighting, and we observed the Lyonnais driven back and back into the city. In spite of the whistling

bullets I peered out through the openings in the shutters, curious, as it were, to measure the danger and to watch its approach; I saw the wounded carried by; I saw women, haggard and dishevelled, rushing past with their children in their arms, screaming as they ran, "Here they are! all is lost! here they are!" In the midst of such sights we passed the day. The curé went from house to house encouraging and consoling: "I will die first," he said, "before a hand is laid on the flock that God has given me to guard." Oh, what terrible hours are such as these, when in full health and strength one awaits the near approach of death, when in God one finds one's only consolation! Our last prayer was that we might die without outrage. . . . Yet, will it be believed, fear acted so strangely on each of us that the result was sometimes comic; we were still able to smile! "You know," said the daughter of our landlord, "one must do all one can to escape. I have put my kerchief on outside in, that they may not kill me."

"But how can that save your life?"

"They will take me for the wife of a *canut*." . . . Poor girl, was it likely they would take time to look at such things?

The remaining partisans of the Convention openly rejoiced at every step gained by them, and became so unruly that, with enemies as dangerous inside the walls as those who were still outside, we were obliged to shut ourselves up behind closed doors, only opening to known voices. Presently there came a knock at our door; it was my father, accompanied by M. de Précy's nephew and the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre. They had been fighting all day and were worn out with fatigue and hunger; M. de Précy still held in his hand a holster-pistol that he had torn from a soldier of the Convention at the skirmish on the Perrache road, where he had himself fought like a lion. It had been a very sharp affair; two horses had been killed under him, and he had succeeded in repulsing a body

of the enemy that had gained a strong position on the roadway. His clothes were in several places pierced by bullets; if only he could have died then! But he was destined to a finer death, for surely it needs more courage to meet it bravely at the hands of an impious tribunal than on the battlefield surrounded with all the prestige of glory.

We offered him a piece of bad bread and a little ham; as to the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre he could eat nothing, having been wounded in the throat, which gave him great pain. He swallowed, as well as he could, a little warm soup; then they went away, and I never saw them again. It was said that M. de Précy had left Condé's army in order to come and share his uncle's danger in Lyons; as to the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, he had not been long in the town, and risked his head, on which there was a price, in order to take part in the resistance of the Lyonnais. During the short time of the siege I saw him frequently at our house, and I shall never forget one day when his shouts of laughter seemed to grow the louder for my father's anger at the clumsiness of a servant. The two gentlemen had been profiting by a quiet moment to have a game of piquet as a distraction from their anxieties in the little room we called our salon, when suddenly they heard a singular noise followed by a lugubrious exclamation. My father got up to see what had happened, Clermont-Tonnerre followed, led by curiosity, and presently called out, "What a fine omelette! Faith, I never saw one to equal it!"

The kitchen floor was covered with eggs; there was not a spot free nor an egg unbroken. "Seven and a half dozen!" said my father mournfully; "our last resource! we had not eaten them, not one; and to be wasted by your clumsiness!"

"I am very sorry," said Saint-Jean, sweeping up whites and yolks with a broom; "the basket was on the shelf. I was reaching up for something, and——"

The Porte-Sainte-Irenée is Taken

"And you are a clumsy lout!" cried my father angrily. "Not one saved!"

The Comte at last dragged him away to their game of piquet, Saint-Jean still sweeping up the eggs and Clermont-Tonnerre repeating gaily, "What a splendid omelette!" But one must have been besieged to realise the value, to us, of these seven and a half dozen of eggs, and to understand the melancholy with which my father repeated, "And not one saved!"

I have said that the attack of the 29th September was general and lasted all day. Towards evening we heard my father's voice in the street, and ran to the window. "Go," he said, "return at once to the city: I would not send a message to you by any one else, so as not to discourage others. We cannot hold the gate long, and the enemy will certainly take the gate before nightfall; you would be exposed to their first excesses. Good-bye: if God wills I shall see you again."

We had not foreseen this new distress, but obedient to his wish we quitted Sainte-Irenée, too sorrowful to be afraid of the cannon-balls and bullets that whistled about us, and descending the hill, we took our melancholy way back to our former lodging at the Hôtel des Douanes. Such of our friends as remained there were dismayed to see us come back, and realised too well that our return foretold the approaching fall of the city and the failure of all our hopes. In fact the gate of Sainte-Irenée was one of the first carried by the enemy, but a redoubt that had been constructed at Saint-Just still barred the way to their advance.

M. de Précy, recognising the impossibility of holding out longer, resolved to leave the city, probably hoping to save the peaceable citizens by removing all those who had taken an active part in the revolt. He advised all who had borne arms to follow him if they wished to escape from the vengeance of an enemy whom we had a right to call bloodthirsty. Two

columns left the town; the first owed its success to the thick fog that lay over the Saône, covering its retreat along the left bank. The column passed below Duchire (where there was a strong garrison of the besiegers), taking every precaution to avoid any noise; it was fortunate enough to get through the enemy's posts unseen and unsuspected. When they got a certain distance away the company dispersed, each to seek his own safety, many with success. But the second column started too late; the fog had begun to lift, and an alarm was given. It was surrounded and cut to pieces; the greater number were killed, the rest made prisoners. There were many women, whose presence had perhaps contributed to the disaster by encumbering the movements of the column; they would not leave their husbands, and many of them perished in the massacre or were flung into the town prisons. I afterwards saw a child of a year old who, carried by his nurse behind Madame de Combelle, his mother, on this dreadful day, had received a sabre stroke that had cut his face practically in two.

My father had refused to leave the town. He foresaw that the troops would be hampered by the presence of the women and children; he would not let us go, and he himself stayed behind. As I have already said, Sainte-Irenée had been taken, though Saint-Just still held out; my father had thus nothing else to do than to protect us so far as was possible. He thought it wiser to leave our lodging in the Douanes and seek one where we would be less well known; for it was easy to foresee that all who had borne arms would be severely treated. My father found a room for us in the old Hotel de Provence, close to the Place de Bellecourt, and next door to the House of Charity. He thought that at the worst this asylum for the poor and for orphans would be respected by the enemy; and the sisters in charge of the hospital promised us a place amidst them in case

of a massacre. We were most kindly received by these good women, who took us through their wards; there was not a complaint from the wounded, and yet they were without almost everything necessary for their condition. They were most tenderly nursed by the sisters, but to what purpose? The unfortunate men were not to be cured; visited by the authorities to ascertain their maladies, all those who had bullet or sword wounds, or other injuries that might have been received under arms, were dragged from their beds, declared to be rebels, and condemned. The quietness of this hospital was comforting, after all the fatigue and excitement in which we lived.

In returning to our lodgings I was nearly killed by a bursting bomb. I heard it whistle, and bent to get out of its way; it struck the wall at the spot where a moment before I had been leaning. This kind of peril repeated itself every minute, and finished by leaving us so unconcerned that it is only to be explained by man's faculty for growing accustomed to anything. We went out in spite of this continual danger, and I remember that one day at Mme. Posuel de Verno's, in the Place de Bellecourt, a servant came to tell her that a bomb had set fire to a neighbouring house which was also her property.

"Is there any one to put it out?" she inquired.

"Yes, madame."

"Very well." And turning to us, she continued the conversation.

Every hour we heard of the death of friends, killed by bombs or by splinters from them; we were in the midst of a whirlpool—in the midst of hurrying events that gave us no time to reflect. Death committed ravages on all sides of us, under our very eyes, we saw it on every hand; we did not try to avoid it, but drifted with the current wherever it might lead us.

The town had sent a deputation to the besiegers to treat for a capitulation, which, it is said, was just about to be signed when the news of M. de Précy's escape

reached the enemy's camp. The capitulation was torn up; some say it was already signed but never put into force. The question is unimportant; the treaty would only have concerned us if carried into effect. Dubois-Crancé, Châteauneuf-Raudon, Laporte, Couthon, and the others were capable of promising anything without ever intending to keep their word.

I have not yet mentioned the commandant of the enemy's artillery; it was our friend, our good friend de Guériot, who sent us such beautiful bombs with the conscientious skill of his profession. After the 29th September he had been sent to Grenoble; I believe, indeed, that the departure of the park of artillery deprived the town of valuable munitions. The wife of the guardian of the arsenal had stayed behind when her husband followed his chief; my father went to see her, to ask if she had any news. The house that she occupied at the arsenal was one of three little pavilions that had escaped the fire, and she advised my father promptly to come and lodge with her. "As soon as they get into the town," she explained, "my husband will come straight here; this place will be respected, and you will be safer here than anywhere else. You can either escape or let M. de Guériot know the danger you are in." My father thought the arrangement good, and gave up his idea of taking refuge in the hospital with the Sisters of Charity, and by the same evening we had removed to M. de Guériot's lodging.

The next day, 9th October 1793, I looked out of the window and a new sight struck my eyes; it was a man pushing a barrow laden with butter and poultry. "The town must be taken," I cried; and in fact the enemy had entered it. Public order had only been disturbed in the quarters near the gates, and in the centre of the city nothing was as yet known; gradually we saw an increasing number of strange faces, and soon there was no doubt left to us as to the end of the struggle. Might had mastered right.

CHAPTER VII

My father hides in the city—M. de Guériot's kindness—Young de Précy and de Clermont-Tonnerre are taken prisoner and shot—Domiciliary visits—My father escapes to Vaise.

THE town having fallen, every one had to provide for himself. We were no longer, as we had been for many months, one body governed by the same spirit, the same interests, inspired by a single heart, whose only desire was to serve our country; where each was ready to sacrifice life and fortune for the precious heritage of peace and liberty.

My father, like every one else, was now free to think of himself; but he had not expected the end to come so quickly, and when we heard the words "The town is taken!" we were as dismayed as if the news were wholly unexpected. We, like others, felt ourselves overwhelmed by the dangers that surrounded us, and from which we did not know how to escape; all the plans we had formed in advance now seemed to be insufficient and impossible to carry out. My father had left many of our belongings in the care of the landlord of the hotel which we had quitted so suddenly the evening before; but finding that among them were some papers of importance he wished to get them back, and as he did not dare to show himself in the streets, and my aunt could only walk with difficulty, it was settled that I should go to fetch them, escorted by her maid. It seems surprising that at such a moment I should have been allowed to go out, and I can only explain it to myself by the importance my father set upon his papers. It is true the distance was not great,

and I should be back again, we thought, before the enemy's troops could have entered the town.

I hastened to carry out my commission and return home; but by this time there were already a great many people about, and at the corner of one street I was stopped by a great big fellow who was very flushed, very gay, very drunk, in short; he caught hold of me and called out, "Great God, what a little arm! how thin it is! Poor mite, how she must have fasted during the siege! She cannot even have had her *picotin*[1] of oatmeal. What a little arm! I never saw such a little one!"

I was in a very disagreeable position; tug as I might at my "little arm," he held on to it firmly. The noise he made attracted notice, and people crowded about us laughing; I suffered much from being stared at with such impertinent curiosity. At last, as my big fellow lifted his hands to call Heaven to witness my little arms, I succeeded in making my escape; he did not try to follow me, imagining perhaps that I was now going to have something to eat. As to me, I made off as fast as I could, still hearing his voice behind me, "*Mon Dieu!* what little arms!"

On my return I found the arsenal already occupied, several pieces of artillery having just arrived. M. Léger was embracing his wife; Belchamp, M. de Guériot's secretary, was getting off his horse. We begged them immediately to advise as to the best way to get my father out of his dangerous position.

"You must profit by the general confusion," Belchamp urged us with decision. "Every one is going out and in freely, in a crowd: this is your chance. Fasten this knot to your hat and get on to my horse, while I walk by your side; I will answer any questions and take you straight to M. de Guériot at headquarters,

[1] "Picotin" was a nickname for the very small measure of oatmeal served round during the siege, with a little oil or dried fruit to eat with it.

for no one knows you there, and who would look for an enemy in such a place? Let us be off; if you wait for the town to be quiet, you will never get out of it."

There was no time to lose, and my father had to start at once. With what a heartache we saw him go from us into the very midst of our enemies, feeling as we did the sting of that most terrible anxiety with which our lives were henceforward to be filled, the uncertainty as to our dear one's fate. Would he get through? Would he be recognised? Would he be in safety? . . . When at last we got word of his arrival, we were for the moment relieved about him, and took the opportunity of leaving the arsenal, and going back to our old lodging in the Hôtel des Douanes. My father, however, was still in great danger, and exposed his protector to the same; but there had been no time to think of, or carry out, any better plan. In a few days, indeed, he even re-entered the town, when the headquarters were removed thither; having no other refuge and no means of finding any, he accompanied the other officers, who, seeing him daily at their chief's table, never suspected that an enemy could have the audacity to take refuge actually amongst themselves. And here I ought to acknowledge with the greatest gratitude all we owed to M. de Guériot, good and worthy man, who was at the time accused of weakness and indecision[1] by many who were not his equals in any way. "He did not emigrate," cried the partisans of emigration. No, truly, but that did not make his position the easier; for who could compare the sufferings of the *emigrés* with those which we had to bear under the Terror in France? He remained at home to protect his wife and daughter, and tried to con-

[1] Without having lived in those times it is difficult to imagine the bitterness of the *ultras* against all who did not emigrate. Such an one was scarcely considered an honest man; though if all good men had gone away, the place would only have been left empty and inviting to those who were nothing of the sort.

ciliate his duties as a soldier with those as husband and father. Once started on this dangerous road, there was nothing for it but to go on; the least imprudence would have led him to the scaffold, and dragged with him those he loved. Forced as he was to live among people whose opinions he did not share, and whose principles he did not approve of, one can imagine how he suffered; but he was repaid for all his sacrifices by being able to save many valuable lives. It is very pleasant to me to render justice to his memory, and to relate all that he did for us; we owe him an eternal gratitude, as well to him as to others who exposed their persons, their possessions—even their reputations!—by living with our persecutors, in order at this cost to save some of their unhappy fellow-countrymen. Certainly, when M. de Guériot gave a place at his table to one of the enemy, he might at any moment have been denounced; but he never hesitated over this extraordinary audacity. He gave commissions, lent uniforms, and did everything that he could to save men who were condemned to death: many men who had a reputation for great courage would have hesitated to undertake so great a risk.

In the early days immediately after the taking of the town, my aunt took me to see Dubois-Crancé, a distant connection of my mother's. Dubois had said, it appears, "that he had now no relations." I presented him with a memorial of which I forget the contents, but which I think recommended us to his protection. What struck me most in this visit was the man himself, very tall, and wearing his black hair *à la Titus;* he was being shaved when we arrived, and the superb basin beside him was of solid silver. "Ho, ho," I thought. "The citizen-representatives have silver plate themselves, though they take it away from us!" His real wife was said to live in the Champagne district on a very small pension, but a charming person who professed to bear his name

received us most graciously! We sat down to wait till Dubois-Crancé had finished his toilet, when he came up to me and asked, "Who are you?" My aunt explained my relationship to him and the object of our visit.

"You are very young," he said, "but you seem to me to look like an aristocrat. Don't you know that I make them all tremble at the sight of me?" I made no reply to this vulgar pleasantry, which certainly did not make me tremble, and when he had read the memorial he declared he had no influence, having been recalled by the Convention.

We came away, not quite as we had come, at least I speak for myself; I felt humiliated by having appealed to this man, and secretly reproached my aunt for having been weak enough to solicit support from one whom I had been taught to despise. The uselessness of it, too, seemed to prove that it had been a mistake; but what will one not attempt if it is to save those we love? I was to learn, and bitterly, how to beg for protection and help from persons greatly inferior to Dubois-Crancé. . . . My father lived with us in great retirement, keeping himself hidden from every one. The Count de Clermont-Tonnerre had been shot on the Place de Bellecour a few days after the besiegers had entered the town;[1] it was said that he had escaped from his enemies in the disguise of a peasant, but that one night, having taken shelter in a barn along with some revolutionary volunteers, fatigue made him fall asleep, and in his dreams he spoke, telling his name and history; he woke only to be arrested, and taken back to Lyons, where all was ended. His death, followed by many others, taught us what we had to fear from our new masters, and spread terror amongst all those who were hidden in the town. The victims died with great courage, and as in old days were told the acts of the martyrs, so now we whispered to each

[1] He walked to the place of execution with great self-possession, saluting courteously several acquaintances that he recognised on the way.

other, under cover of darkness and secrecy, the glorious death of our heroes.

Amongst these M. de Précy's nephew took a leading place. He was with the second column of troops that had tried to escape from the city, and when they were surrounded and overcome he was brought back to Lyons with a great number of other prisoners and thrown along with them into prison. Wearing no distinctive uniform and personally unknown to his persecutors, he was on the point of being set free under the obscure name he had adopted, when he was betrayed by his uncle's secretary, who hoped to buy his own life in exchange for his information. Condemned as soon as discovered, young de Précy was taken to the Place de Bellecour to be shot; he would not allow his eyes to be bandaged, and fell crying, "Long live the king!" As to the traitor, he received the fit reward for his treachery, but his death had none of the glory of his victim's.

Day by day the arrests grew more numerous, and the executions were multiplied. Those who had remained in the town, or had been obliged to return thither, lost little by little all hope of escaping the same fate; for how could one fly, who confide in, and where was there to go? While my father was asking himself these questions, without finding any answer to them, trusting always to the next day's better luck, a domiciliary visit was paid us by the authorities of our section in the middle of the night. There was no means of escaping from it, and the only prudent course was to submit with apparent unconcern. My father lay quietly in bed, affecting an ease of mind he certainly did not feel. His papers were carefully examined, but he was not arrested. Indeed, I ought to say here that none of our worst troubles came to us from our own section; it was the higher powers that persecuted us.

Shortly after this, two artillerymen were quartered on us. They apparently found the lodging to their

taste, for in the big kitchen where they slept they established cooking arrangements for fifteen of their comrades who came in to dine with them. Our two soldiers were at first very crusty, and evidently uneasy at finding themselves living with rebels; the least thing aroused their suspicions, as if they expected to be set upon and assassinated. However, when they discovered that the aristocrats were sufficiently worthy people, they quieted down and became more sociable, even going to the length of inviting Cantat and Saint-Jean to dinner. The latter politely returned the invitation, and Saint-Jean, who wanted to do the honours, provided a bottle of excellent wine, of which he vaunted the quality. He filled up the glasses. One of the soldiers, expecting something unusually good, swallowed the contents of his at a gulp and cried out, "I am poisoned!" His companion tried, but in vain, to calm him. "I was warned," he insisted, "that the aristocrats would try to poison us!" . . . Meanwhile Saint-Jean had tasted the unlucky wine, and found that it was—strong vinegar! With great tact and presence of mind he drank off a big glass of the supposed poison, and, confounding himself in excuses, re-established harmony by fetching the proper bottle.

Ever since the arrival of our two guards my father had kept quite out of their way, never leaving his room save when they were not there to see him. It happened, however, in spite of all our care, that he met the elder of the two one day, when he spoke to him unconcernedly, as if he had nothing to fear. A short time passed peacefully enough, when one evening, as Cantat was about to leave my aunt's room on her way to her own bed, some one knocked at the door and called out in a low but hurried voice. She opened and found our neighbour's maid.

"Wake your master," she said quickly; "they are coming to arrest him, and there's not a moment to lose. They knocked at the door downstairs, and I opened my window. There are a great many of them.

They asked if it was not here that he lived; I directed them to the other entrance,[1] but they are coming back already."

We called my father, who jumped out of bed and rushed out of the room and across the landing, Madame de Souligné's door closing after him; whereupon we heard voices cry out, "He is escaping; they are shutting a door." In fact, there was but this one door between him and them. They rushed up towards Cantat, who went to meet them with a light in her hand.

"Where is he? We heard some one walking——"

"Of course you heard some one walking, Citizens, since we had to open the door to you. Didn't you knock twice, to show it was for the second storey?"

"Yes, and you were abominably long in opening to us. But we will find him, for we know he is here."

They did indeed know it. Saint-Jean, a talkative and imprudent fellow, had met some people from Moulins, who had come in with the Parisian army to help in ravaging the town of Lyons, which was now called "Freed Commune." They had asked him for news of my father, and Saint-Jean, for the mere delight of telling what he knew and what they wanted to know, and in his inveterate love of chattering, even gave them our address.

I shall never forget this terrible night. So short a time elapsed between the first warning and the appearance of the Commissaries that there was no time for reflection. For instance, I was in the great bed which I shared with my aunt, and my father's was at the other end of the room. It would have been wise if I had taken his place in it, and thus saved ourselves the trouble of accounting for it; but this occurred to none of us. We hid his things between us, having scarcely time to do so before the Commissaries appeared.

[1] The Hôtel des Douanes had two doors, which both bore the same number.

"Where is he? Where is he?" they cried impatiently.

"Who?"

"Giraud des Écherolles."

"He has gone away."

"Where is his room?"

"Here."

"Where does he sleep?"

"In that bed."

"How comes it in disorder?"

"In his absence my maid sleeps there," my aunt said; "I am afraid of being left alone."

"All very fine, but we don't believe a word of it." And placing a guard at our door, they began to search through every room. When they arrived at Cantat's, they found the bed, not in disorder, but prepared for sleeping in.

"Who sleeps here?"

"I do," she said.

"Then why is the bed made down to-night?"

She made some answer which did not satisfy them, and they came back furiously repeating again and again, "We will find him." They left us under the guard of the sentries, placed not only at our door but in each room of our lodging, and went away to continue their search in other parts of the house. God knows what we felt when we heard them knock at Madame de Souligné's door, and could not remember a single corner where she could have hidden him! We could almost see them reappearing, dragging my father along with them, and an anguish that is beyond words seemed to chill the blood in our veins and stop the pulse of life. How long and cruel that waiting was! But when they came back, it was without him, and we lifted up our hearts in gratitude to God.

Furious at their want of success, their anger fell upon Cantat and Saint-Jean, who was bitterly repenting his talkativeness. It was decided that both should go to prison for the night at any rate, and the poor

creatures took their nightcaps and prepared very despondently to set out, when suddenly the Commissaries remembered our two soldiers whom they had already seen peaceably in bed, and put off their departure to take their testimony. The one who had never seen my father swore, on the faith of a good republican, that all the time he had been in the house he had seen no other man there than citizen Marigny (Saint-Jean, a name we were no longer permitted to use). His comrade held his tongue and signed the deposition: one word from him would have been our ruin.

"You have to thank these worthy republicans," said the Commissaries, "that you are allowed in the meantime to remain here."

We lay without daring to move till daybreak, afraid even to speak to each other lest we should be spied upon. As soon as it was light enough to see, Madame de Souligné's maid came to ask for my father's clothes, and when our good soldiers had gone out he came back to us, having passed the night in a small cupboard with a wardrobe pulled in front of the door as a screen; and being in a very dark corner, the existence of the cupboard had by a wonderful chance escaped observation. He had heard his enemies knocking at the door and speaking quite close to him, and had made up his mind that he would be taken. The night had been terribly long and cold for him, as he had no clothes; it was the end of October 1793. We met with the joy of people who have escaped from death, but are still in danger; indeed, the sword of Damocles, suspended over our heads, might fall at any moment upon us. We had to come to some decision as to what to do, a difficult thing, as we had few friends to help us save such as were in the same position as ourselves; and all were afraid of compromising themselves, besides being fully absorbed with their own troubles. Our every movement, we knew, would be watched, and any one who left the

I arrange for my Father's Escape

house would be followed: the indiscretion of our servant had nearly already ruined us, and prevented us from confiding in him again. It was settled, therefore, that I was to make all the arrangements for the plan that we had decided on, my age and small size making it appear unlikely that I should be trusted with anything important. Had my aunt gone out she would at once have attracted the attention of the spies whom we saw loitering about outside the house a great part of the day.

I went, therefore, straight to Madame Tournouer, the same who had once already roused us in the middle of the night to warn my father that he was in danger. She lived with her husband at the town gate on the bank of the Saône, near the Vaise suburb: their house was not exactly an inn, but it was something better than a tavern, though they were not so well to do as they had been. I arranged with her for my father's escape if once he could reach her safely; and to provide for this I had to undertake another expedition. This time I went to the other end of Lyons, to one M. Clémençon, an acquaintance of my brother's. His wife was alone and was quite a stranger to my family, but she greeted me with great kindness, and I found in her a desire to help us that one could only have looked for in an old friend. Not only did she consent to lend us her husband's uniform, but she offered to come herself, accompanied by a friend whom she could trust to escort my father, who would attract far less attention in the company of ladies than if he were alone. The Hôtel des Douanes being traversed by a public passage-way, made it easier for him to get out unnoticed. Dressed as a National Guard, and giving his arm to his protectresses, he left the house early in the afternoon, and choosing the quietest streets, they made their way without difficulty to their destination. Madame Tournouer's house was full of people; as soon as she saw his uniform and the ladies, she made voluble excuses for the noise and the crowd. "There

is no room here," she repeated. "You will be very uncomfortable, I am sure the ladies would prefer a quieter place: please to follow me to the summer-house in the garden." My father threaded his way through the press with apparent unconcern, calling for something to drink. . . . Presently his two companions left him and returned to tell us of his safety, which made us very happy; if indeed it could be called safety, in a tavern full of men ready to denounce him, perhaps to tear him to pieces, if once they recognised him or guessed who he was. Nevertheless to know that he had escaped from a house so surrounded by spies as ours, seemed to us, then, safety itself. Does not this portray the times we lived in?

It was now only necessary to get him out of the town without passing through the gate; this was done by bringing a boat close up under the summer-house, so that he could slip from the one into the other in the middle of the night, cautiously and without noise. The boatwoman[1] rowed him very gently till the gate was passed; then he landed and found himself in the suburb of Vaise, where, by Madame Tournouer's influence, he was hidden in a "sequestrated" room, this being a spot where he was for the moment safe from all visit or disturbance. She had not had time to find anything better; and as I have said already, we lived in those days from minute to minute. To look forward, and to count upon the next, was impossible. He was now once more outside of the city, having passed the barriers; it was a very difficult thing to do, sometimes forbidden even to free and unsuspected citizens. There were days when no one was allowed to pass; and others when it was only possible to get through by submitting to a severe interrogation, or by exhibiting the most unexceptionable papers. A story was told of a person who, like my father, desired to leave the town, and who also,

[1] These little boats upon the Saône are called *bèches*, and are almost always rowed by women.

like him, had no passport; he was clever enough to reach the Vaise gate unnoticed, and standing still in the middle of it he waited till the sentry came towards him on his beat. "Is it true, Citizen," he inquired, "that no one is allowed to come out of the town to-day?"

"Yes, Citizen: those are the orders."

"Then I will not go in!" and he turned away and went off in the most natural manner. The sentry, seeing him without a hat, thought he lived in one of the neighbouring houses, and let him go.

Yet another danger befell my father in the very asylum which seemed so safe. He had been forbidden to make the least sound, or to walk about, for once the seals are set upon a room, there ought to be no one living in it; he promised readily, but did not keep his word. It was beyond his strength, impossible to one of his vivacity, to remain so still and inactive; an old woman living underneath heard some sounds, and fearing lest it were a thief, went at once to lay information that the lodging was occupied. There was a great commotion, and the authorities arrived in haste; but fortunately my father had been warned, and there was no one there. He escaped from it as secretly as he had got in a few days before. Here was a new difficulty, for nothing was ready for his flight; what could we do? and where could he go to? That day the gates were open, and free passage was allowed; he took advantage of it to re-enter the town which he had just left with so much difficulty. He went to the Convent of the Two Lovers,[1] which had been transformed during the siege into a hospital. Our enemies had fired so continually on the Hôtel-Dieu, from which they were separated only by the Rhône, that this fine building, shattered by their bullets, was no longer a safe shelter for the sick and

[1] An old legend relates that two lovers threw themselves from a rock into the Saône, and their mourning families founded a convent near the actual spot where the tragedy occurred.

wounded; it had been set on fire five times. The black flag was hoisted, and a truce party was sent to the besiegers to beg that the refuge of the sick and dying should be respected. "There are *muscadins*[1] hiding there," was the reply; and they continued to fire upon it. The patients were then carried to the Convent of the Two Lovers at the other end of the town, as being in a position of greater safety; women gave birth to children in the streets, and some of the sick died there—it was indeed the abomination of desolation of which the Scriptures speak! What dreadful times were those!

Here my father remained hidden for three days, and then passed out with great good fortune, arriving without any mischance at the house of Madame de la Coste, who lived at some distance from Lyons. She did not know him personally, and yet exposed herself to danger in order to help him. I never saw her, and do not know what became of her afterwards. But if these pages are read by any who knew, or are related to her, let them be assured that her memory will always be treasured in our hearts.

During this time we had had our share of the general domiciliary visits, as well as several special ones made to us alone. Without any news of my father, and ignorant of what my brother's fate might have been, we lived in a constant anxiety that nothing could relieve; for we were so surrounded by spies that we did not venture to try to find out anything about them.

[1] The Jacobins gave the name of *muscadins* to all young people who were well born, dressed with elegance, and whom they supposed to be strongly scented.

CHAPTER VIII

Placing of the seals and arrest of my aunt: details of her life in prison—I am allowed to visit her—Citizen Forêt, guardian of the seals, and his wife—Mdlle. de Bellecise—Visits to the prison.

THE time came when our rooms were sequestrated. The day when the Commissaries of the section came to place the seals was the last for me of any sort of study or instruction; henceforward I was at the mercy of circumstances, and had no other masters.

I had still been taking lessons in English, though my drawing lessons had ceased on account of the flight of M. Villone, who was too worthy a man not to be "suspect," and who, moreover, had borne arms during the siege. He had left with me, as it happened, a little engraving of Challier, which, when seen by the Commissaries, gave them the more surprise that they did not know of its existence; they expressed their admiration in pompous exclamations, and putting everything else aside in their delight, despatched it without delay to the section, where there was great joy over this portrait of the martyr to liberty.

The Commissaries made themselves very much at home when they were placing the seals. I heard them speaking quite unrestrainedly of the furniture they intended to choose out of the different houses where they had been, making gracious concessions to each other at our expense! . . . They left as guardian of the seals a small, old man in a wig and grey coat, who carried an ivory-headed stick in his hand, and strutted about with an air of importance; and as soon as they had

given him their instructions they turned to my aunt, and added—

"Citizen Forêt will eat at your table, live in your room, and warm himself at your fire." After which laconic speech they went away, and I ran to warn Mr. Davis not to come any more. Lessons in English! Citizen Forêt would certainly have thought we were conspiring against the Republic! To be called by such a name as "Davis" was in itself a crime, and I do not know whether the poor man did not pay for it with his head.

I came back to our melancholy dwelling, trying to accustom myself to the presence of a witness of our smallest actions, and almost as it were of our thoughts. My aunt took this new trial with a calmness that was marvellous in a person so vivacious, but our misfortunes only served to strengthen her character; she never lost her presence of mind, and her prudence and courage increased with every fresh call upon them. The taste which she had had for luxury and costly surroundings left her completely: the pleasures of life, which she had thoroughly appreciated, never cost her a regret. Forgetting herself in us, for us alone she knew fear, for us alone she trembled; and in the troubles that lay before her she was to give herself up without a sigh for her own fate. So much abnegation and courage can only be found in a soul lifted above itself by the love of God.

The evening arrived, we were just going to sit down to table with Citizen Forêt, and Saint-Jean and Cantat were preparing our frugal meal, when suddenly armed men came up the stair and knocked noisily at our door.

"Where is Giraud des Écherolles?" they demanded.

My aunt said nothing, but pointed to the guardian of the seals, who, being slow in disposition, gave them time to repeat their question with impatience before he explained that Giraud des Écherolles was not there, and that the seals having only been placed

that morning, it was impossible that any one could be in hiding about the apartments. In spite of all he said, however, they sought through every corner of the rooms that were still open before they came back to the one in which we were.

"Where is your brother?" demanded the municipal officer, addressing my aunt.

"I do not know," she answered (which was the exact truth), and to all his questions she gave replies as unsatisfactory.

"Very well; since we cannot find the brother we will take the sister. You will not say where he is? Good! then you will go to prison in his place and remain there till you choose to speak. Come, get on."

I started forward, but a glance from my aunt kept me back. She asked for time to put together the few things she needed, hoping thus to be able to say a few words to me; but it was not permitted, and we were not left alone together for an instant. I dared not even try to catch her eyes, for our every glance was watched. Nevertheless, expecting danger from the moment they entered the room, she had found time to tell me to keep away from her and hold my tongue; and during the few minutes that this scene lasted, she took care to avoid me, or rather, to treat me with indifference. Thus in her love for me she endeavoured to shelter me as long as she could from the surrounding dangers. "If his sister is arrested," she said to herself, "what would they do to his daughter, a child whom they will think can easily be cajoled or forced into betraying his secrets?" . . . Oh dear aunt!

She went away to prison (November 1793) without daring to speak to me, without even a glance in my direction. "Where am I to go?" she asked.

"You will see."

The door opened and then closed upon her: abandoned, utterly alone in the world, for the second time

I lost my mother, guardian, friend, all that I had . . . and I was barely fourteen years old.

Saint-Jean followed them at a distance, and saw my aunt taken to the headquarters of the Change section; he immediately came back to tell me, and we set to work to make a bundle of sheets, blankets, and all that would be needed to make my aunt as comfortable as might be for the night. The guardian of the seals did not interfere with us till Saint-Jean was ready to go out with the bundle and a mattress on his shoulder, when he declared that he would not open the door and that nothing could be removed from the room.

"But these things are hers, and are for her——!"

"I am sorry, but it cannot be done."

"But she is old and will certainly suffer!"

"I am sorry, but it cannot be done."

We had to resign ourselves and learn to understand that Citizen Forêt was our master; and that since we could not go out save with his permission, we were practically prisoners ourselves.

My aunt passed the night in one of the rooms at the section quarters. She scarcely perceived her discomfort, and had no time to think of sleep, for during the whole night there arrived a succession of persons who had also been arrested. At daybreak she was transferred with her companions in misfortune to the Recluses, which house was destined to serve as their prison.

I only heard late on the following day where she was detained, when I immediately sent to the Arsenal, where the furniture which my father had lent to M. de Guériot was still in the charge of Madame Léger; I therefore asked her for a mattress and small bed for my aunt. I am ashamed to say that she not only refused, but tried to convey these very things of ours to another prisoner in whom she was interested, though without success. Next day I went to the section as early as I could, with two objects in view:

to get leave to see my aunt, and to obtain some bread. I may as well explain here how this last was to be got.

In each section there were but a certain number of bakers, who held the exclusive right of selling bread. Their shops were entirely closed save for a small opening to which each person advanced in turn, and presented an order from the section entitling the holder to so many ounces of bread; the baker, after examining it carefully, returned it with the stipulated weight of bread by the same hole, and the file, which was often so long that it stretched through several streets, made one step forward. Those at the far end might with good luck breakfast at five in the afternoon. . . . Such are the delights of liberty.

As I have said, I wished to get leave to see my aunt, and I also wanted an order for bread, both very important matters; and this was the first step I must take in the isolated and difficult path which henceforward I was to tread. It was with great trepidation that I ventured into the hall of the section, where I had to go up alone and speak with composure and self-possession to a number of men who were complete strangers to me, though I fortunately recognised a certain M. Duc, one of the Commissaries who had placed the seals on our effects the day before. I spoke to him of my aunt, of her arrest, and of my great desire to see her.

"Aha!" he said; "*we* left her in peace, but they were not so considerate, eh? Citizens, it is only natural that this little girl should wish to visit her aunt, who has almost been a mother to her. I think we might allow it."

They agreed at once, and gave me a small piece of paper with the stamp of the section upon it, on which they had written an order to let me pass into the Recluses prison. Once in safe possession of this, I spoke again, this time to explain that when our rooms had been sequestrated, we had been commanded to provide for the guardian of the seals, and as I could

not get bread by any other means, I begged for an order from the section to enable me to buy some.

"No, you cannot have it; it is against the law."

"But, Citizens, you know that I can get none without an order; what am I to do?"

"Do what you like."

"But am I to die of hunger?"

"Don't disturb yourself, you will not die of hunger; all the *ci-devants* have private resources, and aristocrats can always get what they want. You have inherited their cleverness. . . . Oh! you will not die of hunger."

"Very well," I replied with decision, "if you will give me nothing to live on, you understand that I can in my turn give nothing to the guardian of the seals for whom you ordered me to provide."

"Oh, he—that is a different matter; he can have an order, he has only to ask for it. *He* is a good republican. But as to you—you can look after yourself, never fear."

I went away straight to the Recluses, where the door was not yet besieged by a crowd. Many had not discovered where their parents or relations were detained; the arrests were still going on, and there was confusion everywhere. It was only, thanks to my having acted so promptly, and thanks also to my youth, which made me careless of ordinary prudence, that I had been able to obtain permission to visit my aunt so soon. I went in through the first gate and asked to see the head gaoler, to whom I showed my paper from the section. He read it, turned it over, read it again, and then paused to reflect, while I awaited his decision, feeling as if my very life depended on it. He had not as yet received any instructions as to admitting visitors, but he was not accustomed to the severity of the new régime, nor was he naturally inclined to unkindness; seeing me almost as little as my order, he took pity on me, and, stifling his doubts, he let me pass in, through a grated doorway, to an inner courtyard. I was almost beside myself with joy

at having succeeded so far, and felt dazed with such a mingling of delight and of sorrow; following close on my guide, absorbed in my own thoughts and feelings, I was suddenly recalled to myself by hearing strange voices about me, the voices of the convicts begging for alms. They crowded round me, jingling their irons; the noise of these, and the insolent evil faces, filled me with an agony of fear. I had never seen crime so close before! Hurrying after my guide, I entered a long dark corridor that led to a staircase, where I had to ask permission to pass from a man who was sitting on the lowest step and talking to a painted woman, brazen-faced and bold; before her eyes mine fell, and I shivered with disgust when the edge of my dress touched her in passing. How hideous that prison was to me! When we arrived at the first storey, I thought I was going to see my aunt at once, but the warder having forgotten his keys, he pointed out where she was confined and went away to fetch them. I waited alone beside the door; there were three bolts to it and two new locks, and all the other doors opening on to the same landing had new locks also, which had evidently just been added.

"My aunt is shut in with such care," I thought, "while criminals are allowed to come and go about the place! . . . *They* walk about, she is confined here." Alas, I scarcely even dared to pity her; my thoughts also were in fetters, and I must not let them be guessed, lest they should harm her or myself.

At last the door was opened and I rushed in, looking about me for my dear aunt; but I could only see women whom I did not know. "Are you a prisoner too?" they cried.

"No, no, I have come to see my aunt."

At that moment she came up to me, radiant with delight at seeing me again.

"How did you manage it? What did you do?"

"Have you slept? Have you had anything to eat? Has it made you ill?" We had so much to ask each

other! The ladies about us looked on with a pitying interest, calling me their good angel, for my presence brought them the hope of seeing the door open again to let in some of those they loved. I was the first free person to enter the prison. "How did you do it?" I was asked again and again. I explained as well as I could, till my aunt, wanting to have me all to herself, took me by the hand and led me to another communicating room, where I sat down beside her on a mattress spread upon the floor. (I forgot to say that after Madame Léger's refusal to give me a bed for my aunt I managed to buy a mattress from a worthy woman who spared it from her own bed, but for two nights and a day my aunt had had nothing to sleep on but a little straw.) This mattress was her bed, table, and chair; indeed, I saw no other furniture in this room, where over fifty persons slept, some upon mattresses like my aunt's, but most upon a mere handful of loose straw. That was what first struck me on entering, and for a while hushed me into silence.

My aunt did not seem to be upset or depressed or even occupied with herself; she was quite taken up with the pleasure of seeing me again, and enjoyed it with all her heart in spite of the many dangers with which she knew that I was exposed. Indeed, her very anxiety about me made her joy greater in having me beside her. Also, weak as I was, I was now in some sort her sole support and hope; I represented all that was left to her. We told each other every trifle of those long three days, so full of terrible novelty for each of us; every hour had to be described, and to pour out everything was a consolation and relief. She embraced me again and again as the time passed by and I must go, but I went away laden with messages which I joyfully undertook to deliver. It was sweet to carry comfort to so many unhappy homes, to tell them how I myself had succeeded in getting into the prison, and to say to them, "I have

seen your dear ones; they are there; they are longing for you." . . . I went away, escorted in triumph to the door. "Don't forget! you will go to-night? We implore you!"

"Yes, yes, this very night," I replied.

My aunt gave me her blessing; and the happiness of feeling myself useful, of being of service to these most unfortunate ladies, lessened the bitterness of leaving her. It helped me also to traverse without fear and with less disgust the dark corridor and the crowd of prisoners of whom I had been so frightened when I came in. I thought of nothing but the work I had to do, and I grew braver. To be of use—how the mere hope of it gave me strength! I, so weak, so small, I could help others. . . . In those few minutes I had grown years older.

I made a tremendous round in the city to deliver the notes with which I had been charged, telling what I had seen and what I had done. Some gave me written answers, some verbal; my memory seemed to have made a sudden growth, and I forgot nothing that was entrusted to me. Saint-Jean accompanied me on my rounds, as it was dark. I only got home very late, very tired, but full of joy, scarcely feeling my fatigue nor resenting the presence of Citizen Forêt at my hearth. Indeed, I was too happy to resent anything! This one day had as it were doubled my faculties, and I went peacefully to sleep, with the happy prospect of next day taking good news to the poor prisoners of their family and friends.

In the morning I went back to the prison, carrying a basket with my aunt's dinner in it. I was allowed to enter and tender an account of my commissions. But what a blow for me! The orders as to visitors had arrived, and my little bit of paper was of no more use. Indeed, the gaoler tore it up before my eyes! though some trace of pity in his heart made him let me, for this time, pass in. This spoilt the happiness of dining with my aunt, sitting beside her on her poor

mattress. "Never mind, you must find out what must be done in order to get a regular permission," was all she said; but I left her very sadly, and passed a most melancholy evening. I had hoped to see her every day, and when we are young we count too much on having what we hope for.

I spoke of my trouble to Citizen Forêt, who replied very humbly that he had no influence with his son, who was a Municipal. This I knew was true; he respected, or rather he feared this powerful son, who had no other merit than to share ignobly in the crimes of his companions, who made no name for himself, but remained obscure, without genius or originality, and had no qualities but greed and cruelty. But—he was a Municipal, and his father held his head in the air when he spoke of "my son, the Municipal." It was easy to see that fear was largely mixed with his admiration of him. Indeed, Citizen Forêt gave me the impression of a piece of furniture in its wrong place; his limited understanding was inclined rather to good than to evil, and it was sometimes with difficulty that he carried out his duties, though he thoroughly enjoyed the good living which he made by it.

He had been a silk-weaver, working hard all the week and squandering on Sunday what he had made in six days: frequently he gave up Monday to the same pleasures, as do so many of his like. When the rich people became poor, his work came to an end; the aristocrats were made to bear the blame of it,—and he found it quite natural that they should provide him with another occupation. To guard the seals was a very lucrative profession, not at all fatiguing, and comparatively innocent. When he first took possession of his post with us, he was in full dress,—grey coat, fine curled wig, an ivory-headed stick in his hand, and a cold and ceremonious air that contrasted oddly with the offhandedness of the Commissaries. I think he was afraid of the savage beasts with whom he

was to live,—for it was so that they called us! And along with all this, he retained from old times a remnant of respect for the nobles of which he could not altogether rid himself, in spite of his desire to be a thoroughgoing Jacobin. When he discovered that we were not savages, he changed for the better. His toilette became less severe; he kept the wig for state occasions, and wore a cap of grey like his coat, and grey slippers. He passed the day sitting by the fire in an armchair, declaring that he had never been so comfortable; from time to time he turned round, fingered the padded back and admired it, and then leaning back heavily so as to enjoy its softness, he would say, "An armchair is really a capital invention;" and presently, after patting the cushions again, "What a good idea it is!" Then stretching out his legs and throwing himself back, he gave himself up to the delight, hitherto unknown to him, of a good easy-chair. He was a sort of animal, rather good-natured than otherwise, but cruel when it came within his orders; detesting the sight of executions but not daring to say so to his wife or son, who impressed on him that he must "rise to the times" and be a "good republican," which, in their language, meant that he must have an insatiable desire to spill, or to look on at the spilling, of human blood.

"I cannot grow accustomed to it," he said to me one day when I knew him better; "they forced me to go and see the guillotine at work, but I came back quite ill and could not sleep for a week afterwards. They may say what they like, but I never shall grow accustomed to it. Now, in the old days, one was left at peace. It's true I had to work, but then I was well paid for it, and I could spend my money with an easy mind. I remember that once I made a waistcoat for Louis XV. It was a beauty, it was, and I got good money for it, too . . . yes, I must allow those were good times!" The poor man would not have made this confession to his wife or his son, the Municipal.

my aunt had been deprived of her food! But I managed to get a cold fowl on which she could fall back when other supplies failed her, and she kept it in a little basket beside her bed, intended to hold the small amount of linen which she had with her.

I have not yet spoken of our neighbours, but their story was practically the same as ours. They also had their rooms sealed; their little grey men quartered on them; the same difficulties and trials; for the general misery had fallen upon us all in a terrible uniformity. M. Mazuyer had made his escape; M. and Madame de Bellecise had been arrested; and as to Félicité, their brave daughter, she was menaced with a special and personal persecution, and had had to seek safety in flight. She was clear-sighted enough to foresee the issue of the siege, and begged leave to quit her parents.

"Let me go," she said; "I have no hope in the future. The Lyonnais cannot hold out unsupported against an army that is daily growing stronger, and there will follow terrible disasters. We must try to get some money before that happens; let me go and do what I can."

She dressed herself as a peasant, and made long circuits to avoid the Army of the Convention, arriving safely at Bellecise, her father's estate, which was about twelve kilomètres[1] from Lyons. Everything had been put under seals by Representative Fouché, who was in authority in the district, and who had her arrested as soon as he knew of her arrival; but Félicité, in spite of the sequestration, succeeded in selling a great many things, and in turning all that was possible into money. Secretly as she did this, Fouché got wind of it, and cited her before his tribunal, accusing her of stealing the property of the Republic; but she defended herself with so much boldness and presence of mind that he let her off with an order to change her conduct, and a warning that he would have his eye

[1] Seven and a half miles.—*Trans.*

upon her. Félicité understood that she could do no more, and took flight.[1] Notwithstanding that a price was put upon her head, she succeeded in reaching Switzerland in safety, travelling on foot in the disguise of a coal-seller, and sleeping on the straw. Thus she escaped from Fouché; and going afterwards to join her sister, who was an *emigrée* at Freibourg, she there found M. Mazuyer, and ultimately married him.[2]

It will be remembered that she had two ribs broken at the taking of Pierre-Cise. A deposit formed at the spot, and caused her violent pain. For several months she could take no nourishment save a single cup of milk in the day, and her condition was looked on as hopeless by the doctors who had seen her. She herself had small hope of getting better, when M. Arnoux, the clever surgeon from Moulins, of whom I have already spoken, came to take refuge at Lyons, and she went to consult him. He was said to be somewhat rough in manner and audacious in his methods; in fact, he proposed at once to extract the deposit, and when she refused such an extreme treatment, he said to her, "Go into the country; drink six pints of water every morning; bathe twice a day rather than once; and ride often on horseback."

"On horseback! when I can scarcely hold myself up on my own feet!"

"Never mind that; ride all the same. Have yourself tied on if need be, and choose a rough-paced horse. You want to be shaken up."

This treatment seemed better suited to Arnoux's manners than to Félicité's health, but she had the courage to undertake it. She went to the country; and one day, after one of these jolting rides, she felt ill, and

[1] The desire to see her parents brought her back to Lyons. I was fortunate enough to see her at Madame de Guériot's, where she passed for a sewing-woman engaged by the day. Her heroism had inspired me with a limitless admiration and a most profound affection. To resemble her was beyond me; to imitate her from a distance was all I might hope for.

[2] Madame la Princesse de Condé, then at Freibourg, was one of the witnesses to her marriage-contract.

brought up the deposit.[1] More than one Æsculapius cried out, and denied that such a treatment could lead to such a result; but she said nothing—she was cured!

I have anticipated somewhat to give this short sketch of Félicité de Bellecise, whose memory deserves to be preserved. The details were only known long after; for at that time every one was living out his own story, and had neither time nor occasion to interest himself in that of others. And this brings me back to mine.

As I could not get in, I passed the day in front of the prison gate, my feet in the mud that was carefully collected there, pushed and shoved about amongst the two hundred or more women who had come on the same errand. My fatigue, great though it was, was less overwhelming than my distress at not seeing my aunt; and at last I decided to try the effect of an appeal for pity. Having observed that one of the gatekeepers had a gentler expression than his comrades, I addressed myself to him, and put a bundle of small assignats into his hand.

"Have pity on me!" I begged. "Let me see my aunt, my second mother! See how little and weak I am; I cannot get through the crowd at the gate. Look, take this, and call me from the step as if I was to go to see the gaoler. Perhaps if once I get through the first door, I may find the others less difficult, and your kindness may help me further."

He went away without answering, but presently I heard a loud voice calling out, "Little citizeness Giraud!" and crying in reply, "Here I am, here I am!" I made my way through the crowd that opened jealously for me to advance. Ah! there we might reasonably value our "rank." . . . My heart was beating violently, and I and my basket had hard work to

[1] The above is textually exact, but the statement is so extraordinary that Mademoiselle des Écherolles must bear the whole responsibility of it. Pleuritic adhesions, which might *à la rigueur* have been treated in the above rough-and-ready fashion, could certainly not have been "brought up" as described.—*Translator's note.*

look after ourselves. Some pushing elbows had disturbed the equilibrium of my dishes, and the soup was streaming down upon my skirt; but in spite of all difficulties I reached the steps, and passed through the first door. The other two, with the help of my assignats, were easier to manage; and at last I reached the courtyard, the corridor, the stair. How I had longed to see them again! How beautiful they looked to my eyes! I had achieved a victory, and the weaker I was the more I felt it a triumph. I was with my aunt once more. . . . What a joy!

I found she had increased her furniture by an old chair which she had bought from the gaoler, and which served as a table. Here I took my dinner beside her, sharing the meal which had been so shaken up and was all cold, and finding it delicious. All the happy day I spent with her, content in her presence, regretting nothing, seeing nothing but her dear face; and it was only her reiterated orders that induced me to leave her at last. For what a sad home-coming was mine! I would have given all I had to stay with my aunt. It was no doubt a selfish wish, but it was hard indeed to go back to my fireside and sit between two spies, listening to two servants who quarrelled incessantly. Worn out with the day's fatigue, aching with having stood for hours in the mud, knocked about and bruised by the crowd, and too often failing to see my aunt, what a heavy burden life seemed to me! The prison would have been, in comparison, freedom, and I longed to live in that gloomy place, as one longs for some great happiness. It was only in obedience to my aunt's orders, and in the hope of being useful to her, that I refrained from begging to be confined along with her. I was scarcely awake in the morning before Citizen Forêt knocked at the door. He grumbled if he were kept waiting, and as I made myself a slave to his lightest desires in order not to cross him save when it was inevitable and necessary, I hurried to let him enter. Once in my room he did

not leave it again all day. I could not give way to my feelings when he was there to watch my tears, but perhaps this constant constraint helped to teach me strength of mind and self-control. God sows in such trials the seeds of many virtues!

After this first attempt, I often succeeded in getting into the prison. One or two of the gaolers were comparatively kind, taking my assignats, it is true, with great readiness, but willing to help me in spite of the many difficulties which were daily raised to prevent us from visiting the prisoners. The greater number of these, I believe, were merely excuses for plundering us, for every fresh obstacle could be evaded if one were willing to pay for it. Malleval, Durand, Placot, and Meunier, however, were remarkable amongst their comrades for the moderation of their manners, and they did what they could to lessen the bitterness of the prisoners' fate. My aunt, by many entreaties and more gifts, obtained for me their goodwill. One would call me in, another pass me on, till once safe with her I forgot everything else, even to the terrors of the daily executions. It cost me so much to reach her, that when I had succeeded I could think of nothing but the joy of finding myself beside her, of having once more a friend—a family. Only those who have known such utter abandonment as I felt at other times, can appreciate its misery, and can understand how beautiful the prison was in my eyes.

And what a prison it was! What a strange company was shut into that one room—noble ladies, fishwives, religious, girls of bad life, rich women and poor serving-maids, peasants and herb-sellers![1] And in the midst of it all, spies, of whose existence we were aware but whom we never discovered. At such a time and in such a place one realised to the full the value of *real* virtue, of *real* nobility and equality, unsullied by passion and crime.

[1] I saw a little English girl of four with her nurse who could not speak a word of French. I was present when they were released.

Life in the Prison

The big attic or garret was soon as full as the room itself, for the arrests continued as numerous as ever. I recall that Mesdames de Saint-Fons, de Mognat, and de Montbrial were all in the same chamber as my aunt, but when the number of the inmates reached fifty-eight there was no space for more, and new comers were lodged in the garret adjoining. I saw less of these, but amongst them were Madame Brochet and her daughters, of whom I must say a few words. I am not wandering from my subject, for this is a history of the unfortunate, and we were a numerous family.

Madame Brochet was arrested, along with her two elder daughters, because they would not declare where her husband was in hiding. She had a third daughter of eight years old, who was taken away from her in order that she might be interrogated apart, for it was hoped that when deprived of her mother's counsel and support she would innocently tell them what they wanted to know. To further coerce her, she was promised rewards or punishments according to what she might say. But the little girl was neither enticed by the one nor frightened by the other. She upset their calculations by holding fast to what she knew was her duty, and replied to their insidious questions only by these simple and childish words—"I do not know where papa is, but if I did, I would not tell you." Vanquished by her innocent steadfastness, they allowed her to return to her mother. . . . It was in the company of Madame Brochet that I saw M. de Beaumont, colonel of the regiment of dragoons then quartered at Lyons, and himself a prisoner at the Recluses. For a few days there had been a slight relaxation of the severity of the confinement, and the prisoners were allowed to leave their rooms for a short time daily. Profiting by this he came to visit and renew his acquaintance with her, for it was a pleasure to find a familiar face in the midst of a crowd of uncongenial strangers. I do not know why he had been arrested, but I well remember that

he was the cause of a night of terror for the other prisoners. His soldiers, it appears, had remained faithful to him, and repeatedly demanded his return, but so far in vain; and realising as they did, perhaps better than any one else, the danger of confinement (for it was they who were on guard at the executions), they at last went to the tribunal and tumultuously insisted that their chief should be given back to them, and then proceeding to the prison, as noisily demanded his release. The Recluses was thus suddenly surrounded by a yelling mob, for the regiment was wild with excitement by the time their colonel rejoined them. It was night. Strange rumours spread hither and thither in the interior of the prison, and while the dragoons carried off their beloved M. de Beaumont in a fury of delight, the prisoners believed that they were about to be murdered. It was only next day that they learnt the real cause of the commotion. My aunt said to me simply, "We thought we were all to be massacred last night. I said farewell to you."

Small groups were gradually formed amongst the prisoners, and certain conveniences contrived. A few more chairs made their appearance; Madame de Saint-Fons was, I think, the first to obtain a table. She lent it to her neighbours, who arranged to dine at it in turns, one after the other, keeping very punctually to their respective turns, for such courtesies were imperative, and then, to dine sitting at a table had become a great luxury! My aunt shared her meals with three other ladies: Mademoiselle Olivier,[1] librarian; Mademoiselle Huette, a dressmaker; and Madame des Plantes, proprietress of the Hôtel du Midi on the Place Bellecourt. This last had for a long time hidden in her house Monsieur des Plantes, the officer who had escaped from the Pierre-Cise massacre; his gratitude to her had grown into affection and

[1] She sold all the forbidden pamphlets; I remember we bought a copy of the king's will from her, but one needed to know the password before it was possible to penetrate into her "sanctuary."

they were married. She was now in prison in his place. When my aunt and these ladies shared their dinner, I brought soup for my contribution, for I was a supplement to the quartette; and by making economies on every three dinners, we contrived a fourth. Those days were the happiest of all; I arrived as early as the gates were opened, only bringing with me eggs and butter and salt, and I spent the whole day in the prison. We frequently walked in the long garret, and though it was filled with a very bad smell on account of the retiring-room, which opened from it, the air was healthier than in the chamber inhabited night and day by fifty-eight women; the windows of which, moreover, were never opened, as those whose place was close to them would not permit it. As there was no fire or anything of the kind, and it was now the month of November, this was not altogether surprising. After the promenade and a little conversation, we came back to our place to prepare dinner, a duty which, as I was the youngest, was entrusted to me. As I have just said, there was no fire. Tired of eating cold food and of breathing damp and unhealthy air, the prisoners asked for a stove; the weather was very cold, and the heavy and fetid atmosphere of their room had great need of being purified and dried by a fire, but although they offered to pay the cost themselves, their request was refused. They then begged for *chaufferettes*[1] filled with live coals, but again without success, though they ultimately obtained permission to have *chaufferettes* heated with coal-dust, which were refilled once in twenty-four hours. They were only kept alight with difficulty by stirring them from time to time with a small poker, which raised the dust and allowed the air to fan a little fire into existence. On this miserable sort of *chaufferette* I placed the tall and narrow pots in which I brought food to the prison, no other shape

[1] Small braziers or foot-warmers, generally used with charcoal, and easily portable.—*Translator's note.*

being of any use in the pushing and struggling of the crowd; indeed, they could only, as it was, be filled half-full! Then, lying down on the ground so as to be on a level with my poor little fire, I blew with all my might till I succeeded in fanning it into a certain heat. It took a long while; I had to begin early in order to have dinner at twelve. . . . Cold veal cut up and warmed in soup we called a ragôut; but my great achievement, our principal luxury, was an omelette, which fine name we gave to a dish of eggs beaten up with spinach left over from the day before. It was a favourite, partly because it was a good deal of trouble, but more because it was cooked on the spot. Coffee was kept strictly for breakfast; I brought it ready mixed with milk and sweetened with a poor kind of syrup that was thick and black, sugar being too dear for us. But my aunt actually seemed to take this dreadful coffee with enjoyment; she was so grateful for any attention or kindness that she never found fault with anything, and declared, on the contrary, that it was all very good. Bread was distributed every second day, and every morning fresh water was brought in jugs for those who could pay for it; as for those who could not, they would have gone without, had not the richer given to the poor. It was verily and indeed the "glass of water" of the gospels. Once a fortnight straw, nominally clean, was served out, a *clin*, that is, as much as can be held in two hands, to each person; but it became so quickly scattered and reduced in use that the poorer women joined their *clins* together to make a thicker bed, and by means of lying very close, managed to sleep uncomfortably upon it. At night, when all were lying down, the room looked like a huge camp-bed; the floor was so completely covered with mattresses and straw that there was not a single free space where it was possible to stand without treading on one of the fifty-eight unfortunate inmates.

My aunt, whose stoutness caused her much distress,

and who could not move save with difficulty, never allowed herself to make the least complaint; one would have thought she had never been better lodged! But the truth was she was too much absorbed in my father and me to have any concern for herself. Often indeed, in the belief that my father must have rejoined Chambolle, and that both were safe in Switzerland, it was on me alone that her thoughts were centred, me, whom she knew to be so abandoned and helpless. How many prayers she murmured for the orphan she was soon to leave for ever! For she never had the least illusion as to the fate that awaited her, and was not buoyed up by the hopefulness that led so many other prisoners to cruel disappointment. She knew from the first day what to expect, realised that she was to die, and prepared herself for it without hesitation. All the little trials with which every hour was filled were but a preparation for the ultimate sacrifice; and she accepted everything with a peaceful and serene submission, happy in resigning herself to the will of God. She was too pitiful of my frailty and my love for her to speak much of these things to me then, but I have recalled much since that has made me realise in veneration and wonder the beauty of a character whose force and devotion I was still too young to fully understand. God alone could fathom the great heart that He had made so strong and tender; and He alone had the power to reward it.

CHAPTER IX

Fatigues and hardships of my life—My father at the house of Mme. de la Coste—He escapes by a miracle—Disguised as a miller's boy—I join him at Fontaine, at the house of Mère Chozières—The story of Mdlle. de Sauriac.

THE prison bread, if such it could be called, was so bad that none could eat it. It was made of a heavy dough mixed with bran, and with pieces of straw in it as long as one's finger, with a very hard crust. The prisoners received a small loaf every other day, but my aunt took none, as she could not eat it. As to me I had none either, and found it hard to accept the warder's, which was also very bad; but where could one obtain better? It was not to be bought anywhere; but at last Providence came to my aid in the shape of Brugnon, my father's worthy servant.

He had taken part in the siege that had ended so cruelly, and having borne arms was liable to the punishment of death; but our friend M. de Guériot saved him, at my father's entreaty, by enrolling him in the artillery, so that he appeared to enter the city in the ranks of the besieging army. He shortly afterwards took service with an artillery officer, M. de Montlezun, while still continuing to receive his pay as a driver: and having a good deal of liberty, and suspecting our distress, he contrived to bring me his daily ration of bread. It was excellent, and how happy I was when I took it to my aunt! He also often brought me milk and pieces of ham, which I accepted with heartfelt thanks, and, indeed, he behaved like the worthy man and faithful servant that he was, and although it forces me to anticipate, it is so pleasant to

see virtue rewarded already in this life, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of telling his further history.

There was a large and handsome house in the Rue St. Dominique belonging to a Mademoiselle Chirat, who was very old and very wealthy. Her fortune proved a temptation to a man of rather bad character, who was nevertheless not bad enough to make away with her in order to get possession of it—a means, moreover, not always resulting happily for those who make use of it. He fell back on another plan; he frightened Mdlle. Chirat, and persuaded her that she was in danger, that her fortune would be seized, that her life was menaced, and that there was but one way open for her to protect herself, by marrying a good republican, and so putting her head and her money out of reach of attack. She was terrified; he was ready to sacrifice himself to save her! She was taken to the Municipality, the contract was drawn up and signed, and she came back the wife of her pretended protector. But he, very soon as tired of his old wife as she was of her young husband, treated her badly and she returned it; and as this state of affairs was unpleasant for both, they wisely proposed to come to an amicable agreement and to separate. Mdlle. Chirat offered a considerable sum to her young husband on condition that he relinquished all pretension to her other property, and that she should never be further troubled by him, and the man, who was probably nothing worse than a scapegrace, weary of his position and delighted with such a chance of escape, accepted her offer and straightway disappeared, leaving her delighted to find herself "Mademoiselle Chirat" once more.

This husband of a few days kept his word and never turned up again. During her "widowhood" it chanced that M. de Montlezun lodged with her, and during his frequent absences Brugnon made himself very useful to the mistress of the house. Being an intelligent man, and not without education, he man-

aged very well the business matters that she entrusted to him after having made trial of his capacities in less important services; and gradually he became so necessary to her that she dreaded the moment when M. de Montlezun should go away. Worthy people *out* of prison were rare! Having no other adviser, and being unable to look after things herself, she was afraid of again falling into the clutches of a good-for-nothing; so she determined to attach Brugnon to her by marrying him to her maid, who was herself possessed of some fortune. She added a considerable amount and gave them besides a house in the country. I have since seen Brugnon enjoying the comforts with which she had rewarded his services, and I thanked God that it should be so; may all those who are faithful and devoted be as visibly recompensed, for it is a consolation to those who look on and a hope for those who waver.

The ration bread, the best that was then to be had, I kept for my aunt, taking hers in exchange and bringing it away with great risk and peril. Had I been caught in the act, I and my bread would have stayed in prison!—but my temerity was never found out. I also took back the fowl bones as a precaution, lest the dinner should not be allowed to pass; but I could not keep them for myself, as I had to share everything with Citizen Forêt. He greatly relished the grilled bones, being as little accustomed to eat Brest chickens as to sit in an armchair; but the habits of luxury are easily learnt, as I found one day when, having bought, in order to economise, a cheaper oil than we had hitherto used, my room, which was also kitchen and dining-room, was filled with a thick smoke. Forêt's wife hurried off in horror and disgust to be ill in her husband's sleeping-room, and he went after her grumbling at the smell: even the servants complained! I sat down alone at table, and when hunger brought the others back I contented myself with asking old Forêt if he had never used

anything but the dearest oil in his own cooking. He muttered something unintelligible, and we went on with our dinner.

I only write down these details, minute as they are, in order to give some idea of my life, of the people who surrounded me, and of the annoyances and worries I suffered at their hands. Moreover, it is only too true that the little vexations of every minute are very hard to bear; and the quarrels between Saint-Jean and Cantat were not the least of the daily difficulties which threatened us with no dinner. As a matter of fact I saw little of Saint-Jean save at meals; he was employed on the demolitions. I suppose he undertook this work, which was open to every one, in order to gain a little money, as was natural enough, for I had none to give him; from time to time I sold some silver or some of the furniture left in the charge of Madame Léger. I had to sell at a loss, and had also to be very careful as to whom I sold the things, trying to find such as were still honest enough not to denounce us, though they might profit by our necessities to buy at half price. For if it was a crime to possess silver plate, it was a still greater offence to sell it!

My own food consisted principally of the remains of beans and potatoes arranged as salads: on holidays we had fritters made of mouldy flour fried in the bad oil of which I have spoken. All that we could obtain of butter and vegetables was kept for my aunt, who abstained from meat on Fridays and Saturdays; indeed, the best of all that our misfortunes had left us was reserved for her. And how often was this precious dinner in jeopardy when the servants quarrelled! How often were my supplications necessary! Going from one to the other, soothing them as best I could, I pointed out that my aunt suffered by their disputes; I begged them, for her sake, to overcome their mutual dislike, "for," I said, "I know that you love her." A couple of days later, the disputes would begin

again. . . . Once more I apologise for dwelling on these details, but I am painting my life, and it is the small touches of the brush that make the resemblance. It must be remembered that I was only fourteen years old.

Meanwhile, frequent perquisitions were still being made to find out my father's whereabouts. Sometimes his arrest was announced to my aunt, so that in her emotion she might be led to betray his retreat: I, in my turn, was worn out by domiciliary visits. One of these took place only a few nights after my aunt had been carried off. They knocked loudly at the door at midnight, and as Citizen Forêt was in his first sleep, they were kept waiting and the knocking continued. At last, after taking the time to dress completely, he opened the door just as it seemed to be on the point of being battered in, and was well rated for his tardiness. My door, fastened on the inner side, renewed their fury; Forêt made timid excuses, and Cantat, scarcely more courageous than he was, trembled so violently that I heard the bed on which she was lying cracking beneath her. My entreaties at last made her overcome her fright sufficiently to drag herself to the door; they rushed in, crying out, "Where is he?" Forêt, indignant that his fidelity should be doubted, pointed out that the rooms were sequestrated and that he was guardian of the seals which he showed on four of the doors; he was still talking by the time they had asked me at least ten questions. At the first sound I had sat up in bed and waited silently for what might happen; the curtains of my huge bed were drawn, but two officers coming to the foot of it, perceived me with astonishment and asked who I was. When I answered I heard a dozen men cry out all together, "What a little voice! *That* is certainly not a man!" And pressing forward, looking over each other's shoulders to see me better, they repeated again, "What a little voice! what a little girl! How thin she is, how sickly!"

Domiciliary Visits Continued

I was the butt of all their pleasantries, while at the same time I underwent a long and dangerous examination concerning my father and his pretended plots, and on the retreat where he was now resting after his labours. I was also questioned about my aunt and my brothers; but my answers were brief, I knew nothing. Questions and phrases were turned about and repeated—I knew nothing. At last they went away, to the great satisfaction of Forêt, who did not like losing his sleep, and whose conceit moreover had been wounded; he made up his mind to be quicker next time in letting them in. As to me, as soon as the visit was over, I was seized by such a fit of trembling as I have never had before or since in my life. My strength fairly gave way as soon as I could no longer hear their footsteps, and crushed by the weight of my loneliness and my misfortunes, overcome by the sense of my own helplessness, I passed the rest of the night in a state of moral and physical suffering that was almost despair. For the first time I realised to the full my utter abandonment.

After that they came several times on similar nocturnal visits, to look for arms that they declared were hidden in the room. Forêt, who did not perceive that this was merely a pretext, repeated each time his story of the seals, and was surprised to find that they did not listen to him, for I alone was the object of all these perquisitions. While the Commissaries pretended to hunt in all the corners, they were putting questions to me that were all the more insidious that they seemed to slip out without evil intention, as suggested by some object which they had come across. Happily I saw through the snare, and was not caught by it.

As a matter of fact I could not have told them what they wanted to know, as I ignored what had become of my father since he had left Vaise. I did not learn till afterwards how much we owed to Madame de la Coste, who had given him shelter. She lived in a house in the country some miles out of town, whither

my father was taken during the night. While he stayed there he never left his room, and, besides herself, only Madame de la Coste's maid knew of his presence. Every morning she shut my father into a cupboard, after having made his bed, so that the other servants, moving unchecked about the house, might be convinced that there was no one in hiding there; he was released from his imprisonment when all was safe, and went into Madame de la Coste's room, which adjoined his. Some days passed tranquilly enough, but M. de la Coste, who was absent from home, was denounced to Fouché, then making his rounds in the district, and the Representative of the People ordered a perquisition to be made in the house.

At about eleven o'clock at night an unaccustomed ring was heard at the door, and the household was roused in alarm. This imperious summons announced the arrival of the authorities; my father was waked and a safer hiding-place sought for him in haste. He was put into a hole made on purpose in the palliasse of Madame de la Coste's bed; the mattress was laid on the top, the bed made as usual, and Madame de la Coste lay down on it. I will leave my father's sufferings to be imagined: he had drawn his nightcap over his ears to protect them from the straw, and held his clenched fists on his forehead so as to keep a little space and air about his mouth. All this took but an instant; and meanwhile downstairs the door had been opened to those who came "from the Representative of the People, Fouché." The Commissaries asked Madame de la Coste where her husband was; "He is absent on business," she said. They informed her that she herself was ordered to appear before Fouché; she resisted, spoke of her bad health, of the nervous ailments that frequently kept her in bed, of her shattered strength, and pointed out that every one could bear witness that she never went out. But it was all in vain. "You must walk, not talk," she was told, and was scarcely allowed the time to dress her-

self. Her maid raised the mattress for an instant to whisper "We are lost!" to my father, before she followed her mistress out of the room; and when he heard the doors locked upon him and sealed, he felt it was but too true.

He was in a frightful position, unable to support the lack of air, and afraid of moving the mattress above him lest he should not be able to replace it as it was before. He hesitated for some time, but the imperious need for breath overcame every other consideration, and he left his suffocating hiding-place as gently as possible. He heard a noise and stopped to listen; it was the voice of men singing hymns in praise of liberty—the dragoons who had been left in the house, and were amusing themselves by drinking. My father, realising his danger, walked about on tiptoe to inspect such means of escape as he could find; but he found few. All was shut, there was no way out, no resource visible; he turned to the windows that looked out on the garden and held counsel with himself. "I may die of hunger, sealed in as I am," he reflected; "or some one may come secretly, before the sequestration is removed, to take away anything that may have pleased the Commissaries. In either case I should be lost." Fearing, moreover, that want of food would diminish his strength, he determined not to wait till the next night to make his escape; and having calculated all his chances, he selected the window of a small dressing-room somewhat further removed than the rest from the direction whence came the sound of singing. He jumped out and received no worse hurt than a scratch on his hand, although he fell on some broken glass with a noise which attracted the attention of the drinkers. They ran out crying, "What's that noise? It must be him!"—while my father had but just the time to hide under a little stair up which they all swarmed, seeking the cause of the sound they had heard, coming and going, opening everything that could be opened, over-

looking only the little stair under their feet, and after vomiting forth oaths against the object of their search, finally returning to their drinking. My father again reflected: if he stayed where he was, he could not hope to escape if a second search were made; if he went elsewhere, which way could he go? He had arrived at night and had never set foot in the garden. But it was necessary to decide; bending nearly double, he started in the direction of a path that seemed to be dark and shaded. He was beginning to flatter himself that he had reached it in safety, but he had forgotten that he still wore his nightcap, and the moon suddenly coming from behind a cloud, her gentle light betrayed my poor father. He heard a shout behind him—"There he is! I see him—I see his white cap!" and knew that he was pursued; there was no more need of caution, he straightened himself and flew towards a vine that climbed a wall in front of him. The ground was steep and forced him to slacken his pace, which his loose slippers further impeded; he saw with despair that the walls were high, but the love of life gave him strength, and helped him in his flight, as he ran on without yet seeing any means of escape. He felt his pursuers nearing him, their steps gained on his, a dragoon put out a hand to seize him, when, in his haste, and with the wine he had drunk, he stumbled and fell. My father reached the corner of the wall, found the remains of an arbour, and with the help of the vine that covered it and a few holes between the stones, succeeded in climbing to the top he scarcely knew how, and dropping to the other side. The nearness of the peril, and the instinct of preservation which is given to us all, developed a strength in him that he had never hitherto possessed. The dragoons, unwilling to attempt the same feat, stopped their pursuit of him; probably they were afraid lest their clumsiness in letting him get away should be imputed to them as a crime, and promising each other to say nothing about it, returned tranquilly to their singing and

drinking. The drop was a prodigious one, though my father escaped with nothing more than a bad shaking. He hastened to examine his surroundings, and discovered to his dismay that he was in another enclosure whose walls were as high as the one he had just climbed over; and having explored part of it cautiously, he came so close to the house, that fearing lest the moonlight should again betray him, he crept into a pigeon-house to wait for dawn and for what fate reserved for him. How long those terrible hours were, when he trembled at every sound!

At last the day broke, and presently a little girl appeared, bringing grain for the pigeons. As soon as she saw my father she took him for a thief, and crying out, turned to run away; but he signed to her to have no fear, and she stopped and came nearer to him. He asked her if she had a father, and who he was.

"He is a vine-dresser here," she answered.

"Very well, go and fetch him, without telling any one else that you have seen me."

She promised to do so, and went off very obediently. In a short time a peasant made his appearance; he had an unpleasant face, and a doubtful and unfriendly manner, but my father was obliged to trust himself to him. He affected perfect confidence, and explaining how he had been fortunate enough to escape pursuit so far, he begged him to give him shelter until he could get away from the place with safety.

"What you say may be true enough," replied the peasant, "but there is nothing to prove that you are not a thief. Moreover, if you are anything else I do not choose to put myself in danger for you; so get out of my place, and as quick as you can."

My father tried to persuade him, but could not talk him over; then, since nothing better was to be obtained, he begged for some old clothes in exchange for his own, which he offered to buy back if he succeeded in getting away. "And if I am taken, you will keep them," he added.

"Haven't you any money?" demanded the peasant, casting an uncertain and calculating eye on my father's new coat.

Fortunately in a side-pocket of this there was a portfolio containing fifty francs, which he had forgotten. It was sufficient to decide the man to accept the bargain, and he went away to fetch some of his oldest and dirtiest clothes. My father put them on in great haste, though still too slowly to satisfy his unwilling host, who was anxious to be rid of him; indeed he would not even cut my father's hair for him, and in order to be in keeping with his disguise he had to do it as best he could for himself. After giving him a few directions as to his route, the man put a vine-pole into his hand, with the words, "There, they will take you for a vine-dresser;" and with a glance to see that all was clear, he thrust him out upon the road.

My father reached some mills on the bank of the Saône in safety, and stayed there for a day or two. But as a more retired place was advisable, he was sent on to a miller who lived in a very lonely spot in the Department of Ain, on the confines of that of the Rhône, where, under the name of Pierre Mérier, he passed for a worthy old miller's man, clumsy but well-intentioned.

Meanwhile my life went on without change. The difficulty of getting into the prison increased every day, frequently I was unable to reach my aunt and returned sorrowfully, overcome with fatigue, without the only consolation that gave me strength to bear it. I spent many long hours waiting at that door which some new order forbade us to enter, turning sadly away when the last hope vanished, and there was nothing to do but to go home; and the next day saw us in the same plight. One day, after many such failures, I was the first of a crowd who were waiting for permission to enter. The sentries crossed their rifles to bar the way, but the impatience and excitement of the crowd produced a movement that over-

came the barrier. I was pressed against the rifles and carried forward, and before the soldiers could succeed in repulsing us, I had received many blows with clenched fists and other rough treatment. A poor feeble ball tossed forward with no force of my own, I was the least guilty, but the most hardly punished. However, profiting by the incident and the confusion that followed upon it, I ran to the second gate and up to the grating, and, oh joy! my aunt was in the court-yard, where the prisoners had for once permission to take the fresh air.[1] I saw her, and was about to call to her, ready to forget all my misfortunes in my delight at seeing her again, when the head gaoler, roused by the noise and angry at such disorders, came to the help of the doorkeepers, and I was turned back. I had never yet failed so close to success. I saw tears in my aunt's eyes, and she must have read my feelings in mine. . . . I went out of the sombre gateway, and all the blows that had rained on me as I was swept in seemed to crush me again as I passed out.

The mud that was accumulated (by design) in front of the prison produced an unhealthy humidity, and we often passed six or seven hours standing ankle-deep in this filth. Many women fell ill in consequence. I was very careful of my health, so as not to fail in my service of love, and procured a pair of lined sabots, whose thick wooden soles kept my feet dry, but rendered walking painful. One night when I went home rather later than usual, Forêt met me with a certain friendliness as he opened the door, saying, "Your nurse has just gone away, after waiting a long time to see you."

"My nurse! why, she is——" I was going to say dead, but stopped in time.

"Is here," he went on. "A citizen is going into the

[1] These permissions were given and withdrawn at will, and were never two days alike. Sometimes we found the prisoners in the yard taking the air in the company of thieves, a liberty that, by the way, cost my aunt her pocket-book, which was stolen from her by one of them.

country to the place where your sister is ill, and asks if you have any commissions."

"Where is she?" I inquired hastily, perceiving that there was a mystery about this visit.

"If you run after her in that direction you will soon overtake her; she has a red bodice and a blue petticoat, and her little girl is on a donkey." I was at the foot of the stair before he had finished speaking, with Cantat at my heels. I did not very well understand what it was all about, but I was determined to find out, and Forêt did not interfere with us, nor make any reflections on the visit of my "nurse." I soon caught sight of the red bodice, blue skirt, donkey, and little girl; and hurrying as much as I could, I presently caught up with them. After being assured that it was indeed the person she sought, the peasant told me that my father was hiding in her house; that he was on the point of attempting to leave France, and that before undertaking so dangerous a journey he wished to see me and to have news of my aunt. She had come into Lyons, in fact, solely to seek me out and give me this message.[1]

This desire of my father's was both kind and cruel. Torn between two duties equally sacred, I felt it almost impossible to leave my aunt and to deprive her of her only consolation; on the other hand, it was perhaps the last time I should see my father, and he might have important matters to confide to me. I at last made up my mind to go, and leaving my aunt in Cantat's care, I begged her to try and see her, and to tell her that my strongest motive in going was to bring her back news of my father. Then I followed my unknown nurse without knowing whither I went.

I had taken care to ask no questions in the maid's

[1] My father, having for long had no communication with us, did not know of his sister's imprisonment, and only asked for me because he knew she could not walk. According to my aunt's express desire, he did not know that she had been arrested in his place; besides, if he had given himself up he would not have saved her, and I should have lost them both.

presence; but when she had left us, I learnt that we were going to Fontaine, a pretty village on the bank of the Saône, some eight kilomètres[1] from Lyons; we did not follow the course of the river, but went by way of the Croix Rousse. The little girl, Driette,[2] offered me her donkey; but I saw she was so tired that I would not take advantage of it. The darkness, the rain, and my heavy sabots made this long walk very painful for me. I did not know the road, which was very rough, and we went very slowly; my impatience, too, made the way seem longer. It was very late before we reached the village, which appeared to me to be at the end of the world; but at last we arrived, I could see houses about us, we passed through streets, and finally the donkey came to a standstill. "Here we are," said the good woman; "now you will see your father." We entered, but he was not there. I was told to go upstairs, where I would find him. I did so; what a picture lay before my eyes! If I could only paint it as I saw it! I stood in silent amazement at the doorway.

A young and pretty peasant girl, leaning against a table, was supporting on her arm a very beautiful woman, who seemed to have just thrown herself out of bed. Her long black hair fell to the floor as her lovely head lay on the peasant girl's arm; a brilliant colour flushed her cheeks with the last and ebbing tide of life. Her eyes were already dim and sightless, and Madeleine was weeping over her as she watched her dying in her arms. An old peasant stood beside them, holding a basin of water; a lamp standing on the floor lit up this strange group, a group that so many events had brought together out of such different surroundings! . . . The old peasant was my father.

This scene broke in upon the current of my thoughts, and in a measure repressed my joy at seeing him again; but my guide, whom I heard called the *mère* Chozières, came to relieve him from attendance on the sick woman, and pointing out that I was tired and wet, told

[1] About five miles.—*Trans.* [2] Diminutive of Dorothy.

him to take me downstairs. We sat together beside the bright fire, and talked busily; he wanted to hear all our news, and I hungered for his. Our short separation furnished material for a long history which lasted until the women came downstairs, saying their charge was asleep, and set about preparing supper; before we finished the meal it was very late in the night. Then the question of where we were to sleep caused much deliberation, for there were more of us than there were beds to hold us. I proposed to pass the night beside the fire, but my father would not hear of this: it was therefore decided that I should sleep in the same room as Mademoiselle de Sauriac (this was the name of the invalid), where I was to have the bed that Madeleine usually shared with her little sister; while the worthy peasants, who declared that they had no intention of going to sleep, induced my father to lie down upon their own bed.

I found Mademoiselle de Sauriac lying on a mattress on the ground, as it had been arranged in case she should have another convulsion. A young man, whom I heard called M. Aléxandre, went upstairs at the same time as I did, and crossed the room to reach the closet where he slept; pausing beside the stove which had been lit on my account, he looked at the sick woman, who was lying on her side with her face hidden. "She will die to-night," he said; "I wish I could have another room! I cannot bear the idea of hearing her moan and gasp, . . . of all the sounds I must listen to, . . . I don't like death. No! I don't like death!"

"What is it that you are afraid of?" I asked. "I sleep across your door. You will have me to guard you!" Whereupon he went to his room, and I undressed as quietly as possible so as not to disturb my companion, whose head nearly touched my bed. I had lain quiet only a short time when the kind peasants came back, covered my head with a handkerchief, and placing a lamp near Mademoiselle de Sauriac, began in low voices

the prayers for the dead. Then I knew what sleep she slept. . . . *Mère* Chozières had been afraid of frightening me by telling me the truth; the 'kerchief over my face was to hide the sad scene from my eyes if I chanced to wake, but expecting me to sleep soundly after the day's fatigues, their piety could no longer refrain from giving the tribute of their prayers to one whom they had loved. When they had finished they got up from their knees very quietly, and went out.

I cannot deny that I was startled to find myself alone with the dead. The silence, the feeble ray of the lamp, the involuntary shudder of nature at the sight of her own destruction, the profound solitude, filled me with a solemn terror. I remembered now the fears of M. Aléxandre. *He* had been afraid of what he should hear, but already an eternal silence had enfolded this unhappy creature. *I* was startled by the noiselessness of this death, for I was accustomed to think of it in the midst of clamour and fury, as when, at mid-day, I heard the mob shouting out the number of heads that had just been mowed down by the Republican scythe, or at three when the cannons fired that mutilated the poor wretches reserved for this worse torture, who were often thrown still alive into the grave! *There* I was accustomed to death; but here, in this quiet and safe spot, it seemed to me as if death could not come, and yet it was here, and this girl lying so near me and yet so far away, was already beyond the ills of this life. . . . I fell asleep in the midst of these meditations. When I woke during the night, I thought I heard her stir; but overcome with fatigue I went off again at once, and did not open my eyes again till seven in the morning. I got up, as careful not to make a noise as though I could still disturb her, and on tiptoe, holding my breath, I quitted that tomb. I do not know whether, under such circumstances, I could sleep again. At that time I was accustomed to seeing death about me, and I had lost something of the terror we generally feel for it; those indeed were enviable who were preserved by a

peaceful and natural end from playing their part on the terrible stage of the guillotine.

This unfortunate girl, who was barely twenty-two years old, had two brothers alive, but she died far away from all whom she loved. A doctor might perhaps have saved her, but we know how the peasants treat illness; Madeleine had no other medicine to give her than her tears. She was deeply attached to Mademoiselle de Sauriac, and told me her story, which was as follows: At the beginning of the Revolution she lived with her family on their estate in Auvergne. A mob of revolted peasants carried her off, and dragged her to a château belonging to one of her uncles, and as a refinement of cruelty, forced her to set fire to it herself. Then they returned her to her parents; but she had lost her reason, and never recovered it, the terror of that night having made a frightful and ineffaceable impression upon her. Having tried in vain to cure her, she was sent to a hospital in Lyons, where the doctors had a high reputation; and for two years she had lived there in a comfortable room, with every care taken of her, but without regaining more than a very feeble understanding of her circumstances. Finally, the doctors decided to send her into the country and a happy chance directed them to Madeleine Chozières, a peasant far superior to the generality of her class, and remarkable by reason of the nobility of her character. Mademoiselle de Sauriac took a fancy to her, and was sent to lodge with the family. But ere long the Reign of Terror swept away all the persons who had had the ordering of her existence; probably her family was driven by its misfortunes to lose sight of her, to abandon her to strangers and peasants who, with all their goodwill, could not surround her with the comforts to which she was accustomed, and which her state required. However that may be, she ceased to receive any news of her relations, and died forlornly in the arms of a stranger, become her only friend. She sometimes spoke to Madeleine of her childhood, which she re-

membered more distinctly than anything else. In a touching voice she would recall the happiness of her early years, her love for her parents and her brothers, their games, their quarrels, and their little sorrows.

"Remember all I tell you, Madeleine," she would say; "you must be my memory, for I can remember so little, sometimes nothing at all. My brothers will not forget me as the others have done. Ah, if they were only in France they would soon come to fetch me, and we should go back all together to our home —a big château, Madeleine—and you should come too; you should be happy; you should never leave me. Ah, my brothers will come back for me, they will come back!"—and with her face turned to the door she would pause in her plaintive monotone and listen for their coming, hardly daring to breathe. So every day she waited for them, but they never came. Perhaps they did not know where their sister was; perhaps they never heard of her death; perhaps, also, it was she who went to rejoin them.

Her death brought strangers about the house, and forced my father to leave it. I was called as a witness to the death of Mademoiselle de Sauriac, but fortunately I was too young to be of any use, which saved me from telling a falsehood, as I should otherwise have been forced to give a wrong name and to pass as one of *mère* Chozières' nine nurslings. In this way my presence in the house would have seemed natural, and no one could have wondered at my taking refuge with her in the state of the times. As to my father, as soon as it was known that a domiciliary visit was to be made, he escaped by way of the garden, and following a lonely and quiet path that took him out of the Rhône department into that of the Ain, he returned to the miller who had already saved his life by giving him refuge, to wait until the danger should pass over. He then returned to Fontaine, *mère* Chozières' house being larger than that of the miller, and his presence causing less inconvenience.

CHAPTER X

Prayers in the stable—Character of *père* Chozières—His wife and daughter—My father and other *emigrés* at Fontaine—Their departure—I return to Lyons and my aunt—The prison and scenes therein.

ONCE it was given out that *mère* Chozières had been my nurse, I needed to take fewer precautions, and was even allowed to take part in the *veillées*,[1] as I much desired. The good women of the neighbourhood were in the habit of meeting about seven or eight in the evening in the Chozières' stable, where fresh straw was spread; they brought their spindles or their knitting, some sat on stools, others upon the straw. A lamp was hung from a beam, and *mère* Chozières, sitting beneath it, presided over the company. When she had finished her work she read aloud from some pious book, and towards midnight closed the *veillée* with a prayer, in which the women about her joined with fervour.

This touching picture will never fade from my memory; its patriarchal simplicity was so dignified and yet so familiar. And I owe many thanks to Providence that in a time when I was abandoned to myself, when I heard none speak of God, nor saw any reverence paid Him, I was to find—in a stable!—a faith so pure, so strong, and so consoling, where religion seemed to me so sincere, where its voice went straight to my heart. I had sore need of all the

[1] *Veillée*, a name given throughout Brittany, and in many other parts of France, to evenings passed by the peasants in company, sometimes for some special work, more often for pleasure, songs, story-telling, dancing, and so on. The custom still exists.—*Translator's note.*

help it could give me! . . . I passed about a week in this worthy house, where poor and ignorant peasants set themselves, and not in vain, to console the misfortunes and the sorrows of those who had once been rich and powerful.

Madeleine Chozières was superior both to her sex and her station. Her graceful but rather timid manners, her smiling and gentle face, disguised a character that was both strong and decided; her will supported her in every difficulty, and she never gave way before an obstacle. She knew everybody's secrets, and every one took her advice, for her tact and prudence were remarkable; and she knew also just how far to trust her father, whose shifty and timid mind kept him within narrow limits.

This man's character caused us great anxiety. Naturally honest and good, he willingly gave shelter to the proscribed; but he was a tippler and coward, and no sooner had he begun to drink than the courage went out of him. He would slip away on the sly to go and drink at the tavern, where he heard violent revolutionary harangues. He was taunted on his obedience to a wife who was pious and loved the aristocrats: he was frightened with the danger to which she exposed him, and urged to set himself up against her. Excited and turbulent, determined to prove himself master, he would return home and declare to his wife that henceforward no one should give orders in his house but himself, and that all the strangers must be turned out at once, for he was going to put himself to no more danger on their account.

The poor woman either held her tongue or tried to calm him by gentle words and a smile whose sweetness I cannot describe. When she thought he had sobered sufficiently to listen to her, she would point out to him the necessity of doing his duty: "You are punished already for going to the tavern," she said; "you come back from it as wicked as the others who

go there. Why do you find reasons to-day that you did not know yesterday for getting rid of these unfortunate strangers? It is because yesterday you obeyed the will of God, to-day you are led astray by blasphemers. Your good heart made you give refuge to these poor people, made you wish to help them; why should you change? Take courage; God sees what you are doing. He will preserve you from the hand of the wicked if you do His will."

After having held out for a while, *père* Chozières generally allowed himself to be convinced by his wife's arguments; but the uncertainty of his mood took away all sense of security from us. It is easy to imagine the distress and anxiety such scenes as the above caused to the unfortunate strangers who were present, and who might at any time fall victim to them. He came home one day, for instance, more excited than usual, and seeing that he was full of some important declaration, we waited tremblingly to hear what it might be.

"Wife," he said roughly, "it has just been published that there is to be no Sunday in future; it is not to be a holiday; the 'decade'[1] is to be the holiday. I shall go to work as usual on Sundays, and put my white shirt on for the decade."

I cannot describe the amazement of *mère* Chozières; she kept silence until, a holy anger seizing on her, she began to reproach him bitterly for his weakness and cowardice. "So you are more afraid of men than of God!" she cried. "You are ashamed of your faith! You know we have been ordered to keep the seventh day as a day of rest, and you—you are going to set it aside! I don't know anything about this 'decade,' this holiday of men's making; I only know God's day. . . . As long as I am with you, you shall not commit this sin; you shall put on your white shirt and your good clothes on the Sunday, and you shall not do a stroke

[1] The tenth day was properly called *décadi*, but the good people shortened it as above.

of work. I will have nothing to do with a man that is ashamed of his God! You can choose between me and these wicked men." Old Chozières did not reply, but sat down beside the hearth, poking the fire and grumbling to himself, without speaking to any one. Then he went away to his shop and his cobbling, and the storm blew over till the next time that he was worked up to some new outbreak, to be vented on us.

Madeleine was the life of the house. Infinitely more intelligent than those who surrounded her, pious and true-hearted as her mother, she had a mind that was peculiarly vigorous and original. She was not content only to shelter the unfortunate or to give them bread; she was determined to save them. She had an excellent judgment and great powers of perception; she knew how to seize an opportunity on the instant, and was skilful in letting only so much of her plans be known as might inspire hope and courage, keeping to herself the greater difficulties and uncertainties. The death of Mademoiselle de Sauriac had caused her profound sorrow, for she had strongly attached herself to the unfortunate creature, whose only friend and comfort she had been. She had entirely occupied herself with her, never leaving her for an instant; and although Mademoiselle de Sauriac had never wholly recovered her reason, she still preserved the habits of speech and manner that belong to a person of good breeding. Her companionship had polished Madeleine's language, without spoiling its truth and simplicity. Moreover, a young German, who had a manufactory of cotton stuffs in the village, had further contributed to Madeleine's education, for, having desired to marry her, he set to work to fit her for the rank of life he occupied, which was much above anything she could have looked for. She was deeply attached to him, and looked forward to a happy life at his side, when this prospect was snatched away from her; and though many others wished to marry

her, she refused them all. She had risen above those of her own class, and indeed was neither understood nor appreciated by them.

Some months before I knew her, there came to the house a beggar, who asked a lodging for one night only; none of the neighbours could take him in, so they had sent him to the Chozières', knowing their hospitality. They very nearly, however, refused him; "But," said Madeleine, "it is very late, and the poor man would have to sleep in the street. Let him come in; for once Pierre can sleep in the hay-loft." Pierre was an idiot lad, whom they fed by charity, and who slept in the kitchen. The beggar was brought indoors; he was miserably clothed, and carried a basket in which were two pigeons. When *mère* Chozières had looked at him, "Oho!" she said to herself, "Pierre's bed will not do for *him*." She prepared another in a closet off the upper room, and gave her guest a good supper. He was very tired; he came from far off; he had still a long way to go; that was all he told them, and all that hospitality allowed them to ask of him. "He is one of the unfortunates who are proscribed," said *mère* Chozières, "for he is no peasant."

"Then pack him off to-morrow," said her husband; adding as an afterthought, "Poor fellow!"

"To-morrow?" Madeleine broke in pitifully. "But he is so tired!"

"Oh, if he is too tired," returned her father shortly, "I suppose we cannot turn him out; that would be too bad. He can rest here for a few days."

The next day the stranger was so worn out that he gladly agreed to stay on. Having nothing else to do than observe his hosts, he came to feel such confidence in Madeleine that he told her his story, and begged her to advise and help him. He had served in the army of La Vendée, and being taken prisoner, was sent to the authorities for trial as a spy and rebel. Such trials are short. . . . He was escorted by two gensdarmes, and as he was very fatigued and scarcely able

to walk, they allowed him to enter a tavern on their way to rest and refresh himself with a glass of wine. M. Aléxandre (for it was he whom I knew under this name) succeeded in making the elder of the gensdarmes drink with him, with the result that he finally fell under the table, helpless and unconscious. The other remained sober, as the prisoner observed with disappointment, which, however, vanished when the soldier spoke to him.

"Monsieur," he said, "I see what you want to do. Don't be afraid, I will not prevent it; on the contrary, if you will wait till I come back, I will help you to escape." He went away, and returned presently with some peasant's clothes and a basket containing two pigeons. "See," he said, "dress yourself as quick as you can. With these pigeons people will take you for a man belonging to the country."

M. Aléxandre seemed to pass in an instant from death to life, but he had little time in which to express his gratitude. Perhaps he was not, after all, the happier of the two.

The pigeons did indeed prove a safeguard, for he had the appearance of coming from a neighbouring market with them, and attracted no notice. He kept away from the busier roads, and only paused at lonely outlying cottages to beg food for himself and his birds. Thus he reached Fontaine. His intention had been to go on to Lyons, where his father and sisters had taken refuge, but in the meantime the siege had come to an end, and fugitives were being daily brought into the city, tracked out like wild beasts, only to be handed over to the executioner. M. Aléxandre dared not enter the town, yet did not know whither to fly: in his perplexity he appealed to Madeleine. "Where can I go? What shall I do?"

"My father is willing to let you stay here for a few days," she said. "Make use of the time to win his liking. Don't tell him you are an *emigré;* only speak of your own father, and tell him that you do not even

know his fate. He may be in prison, and, in any case, you cannot go to Lyons without compromising him and exposing yourself. Remain here in the meantime, and I will get news of him for you. Have you no passport?"

"Yes, but it is false; I wrote it myself."

"Never mind, give it to me; it will satisfy my father, who does not understand such matters; and besides, I will get it countersigned, as if it were all right." She immediately took M. Aléxandre's passport to her father, when that good man, quite reassured, declared that if once it were countersigned, there could be no objection to letting the stranger stay on with them for a while. This was a great point gained

Madeleine then went to Simon Morel, as I think he was called, procurator of the commune. He was a very worthy man, who had long been hopelessly in love with her; and though she had always declined his offers, she was not afraid to appeal to him for help and service. Simon at first refused his aid; but finding it was the only way in which he could make himself agreeable and useful to her, he not only signed the passport himself, but obtained the other signatures which were necessary for it. Shortly after this, it happened that the commune desired to erect a fountain, which was to have a certain elegance. Unfortunately none of the Council could draw out the design, and Madeleine suggested that M. Aléxandre should make a suitable sketch and take it to Morel; it was well thought of, and ultimately adopted. She then paid another visit to her old suitor, and sang the praises of the stranger to him. "None of you write well," she went on, "and your secretary has gone away. Why don't you take him in his place? You would have both his pen and his brain to work for you, and the business of the commune would benefit by it." . . . Morel, enchanted with the idea, accepted it as if it were his own, and thus it came about that the soldier of La Vendée was appointed secretary to the repub-

lican commune of Fontaine. The advantage of this arrangement was that it provided him with a right of domicile, and at the end of three months he could not be refused a passport.

This affair arranged, Madeleine went to Lyons to seek for M. Aléxandre's family; she found his sisters working for their daily bread and his father in prison. She was able to help them in many ways, and in sending the father news of his only son she gave him the last happiness he was to know upon earth (he was executed a few days later). It was just at this time that I made the acquaintance of M. Aléxandre and saw the brave young soldier, who had faced so many dangers, tremble before the peaceful deathbed of a stranger.

We had nightly meetings in which we talked over the means of escape. One very dangerous plan was ultimately settled on: ordinary passports could be managed without much risk, but this was a far more audacious idea. It was proposed that the commune should (in imagination) send four Commissaries to visit a castle situated on the frontier between the department of Ain and Switzerland with an order to examine the archives for papers said to be of importance to the commune of Fontaine. It was hoped that the very effrontery of such a proceeding would pass for truth, though, as it happened, this did not prove to be the case.

The passports were in reality more veritable than many others. They were written by M. Aléxandre, secretary to the commune; Morel, the procurator, affixed his seal, and both signed them. The other signatures were imitated; I myself threw my whole heart into copying with absolute similitude such as were entrusted to me. We thus fabricated quite a number of passports, which Madeleine delivered herself to those who were to make use of them, going long distances sometimes in order to do so; but she grudged no fatigue and hesitated at no risk so long as

she felt herself of service. Nor did she stop here; having observed a young peasant who strongly resembled one of our *emigrés*, she managed to make friends with him and win him over, and presently it appeared that pressing affairs obliged him to go to the neighbouring department, where he had relations. He obtained a passport for this purpose. Two days later it was "cried" in the streets that he had lost a portfolio containing this passport and a considerable sum in assignats, and a reward was promised to whoever found and returned it. The young man, upset by his loss, fell ill and took to his bed, while his double safely made his escape.

M. Bourdin, a merchant who was in hiding at the house of Madeleine's sister, M. Aléxandre, my father, and Charmel, a young peasant who did not choose to serve under the Republic, were the pretended Commissaries who hoped to escape to Switzerland. The preparations for their departure took up several days; go or stay, both were equally dangerous for them, for the house was very small, and in order not to awaken suspicion it was necessary to make no change in the ordinary habits of the daily life. The doors stood open as usual, with an appearance of perfect security, and at any moment we were liable to be taken by surprise. There was nothing even to warn us of coming danger save Driette, a little girl only nine years old, who was our advanced picket, who kept a look-out for unexpected visits and unforeseen perils. Driette, as her mother lovingly called her, was as light as a bird and as quick and keen of eye; alert and merry, she played about like a happy child, yet never for an instant forgot her vigilance. She knew all our secrets; on her discretion many depended for their very lives. Sagacious beyond her years, she reasoned and observed with a rare prudence and understanding, and these qualities were the more precious that it was impossible always to tell her in advance what she must do or to arrange beforehand in cases that

occurred unexpectedly, and in which it was necessary to act in concert.

I remember that one day the mayor arrived so suddenly that Driette had barely time to warn us. "Here is the mayor," she cried, "here, just behind me——" My father was in the room, and there was but the one door and no means of escape. He hid himself in the curtains of the bed, always left hanging loose in view of such a moment; when I saw nothing between him and discovery but so flimsy a screen, I felt as if I could scarcely breathe. One good look into the corners and he would have been seen. . . . *Mère* Chozières, never losing her presence of mind, went to meet the mayor, and giving him a chair beside the fire, she began to talk to him with vivacity and unconcern. Busying herself about his comfort, informing herself as to his health, his wife's health, their affairs and prospects, she managed to keep so near him that she was leaning on his chair and almost touching his shoulder; her figure hid fully half of the room from him, and seeing her object I advanced to her side and added what I could to the screen she made. While she was cheerfully talking, my father, summoned by a sign from Driette, crossed the room on tiptoe and vanished through the door. I breathed again, and Driette began to sing! . . . Scarcely was he safely away than *mère* Chozières, moving aside and always chatting easily, made it possible for the mayor to see the whole of the room, which he scrutinised with great keenness; it was evident that he had counted on surprising her, and wished to make sure whether there was any foundation for the rumours that were circulated about her and her hospitality to strangers. When he rose, *mère* Chozières contrived without ostentation to show him over the house. It is impossible to describe the simple and easy air with which the good woman made him admire this or that piece of furniture and the skill with which she directed his eyes to every corner—where there was now nothing

to see. The mayor went away completely reassured, and convinced that the object of his coming had not been discovered.

This visit, however, hastened the moment of departure, and the days, so full of anxiety and a painful joy, slipped by very quickly. I was happy to be with my father, but I could not delight as I wished in his company; from one instant to another he might be discovered and carried off, and in spite of me I longed to know that he was away. And then there was my aunt; I had no news of her, and she did not even know where I was. What must she be thinking of my long absence? How uneasy she would be about the safety of the one being who was left to her! My heart drew me towards her, but I waited to the last in order to be able to tell her, when I threw myself into her arms once more, "My father is safe!" And yet the very departure for which we were busy preparing, and from which we hoped so much, was to lead him into new dangers.

Nevertheless every evening the cannon, which we could hear even at Fontaine, told us of the death of his friends and brothers-in-arms, and we knew that many who were not fortunate enough to be killed on the spot were despatched by the soldiers of (I believe) the 9th Dragoons. Some were thrown alive into the ditches dug to receive them, and only died under the pressure of the dead who were piled upon them in their turn; others again were tossed, mutilated and bleeding, into the Rhône. That terrible sound of cannon firing which we heard every evening told the unhappy men who were still in hiding about Lyons the fate that awaited them if they were taken; and daily my father would hide his face in his hands and say, "To-day it is their turn; soon, perhaps to-morrow, it will be mine! This hospitable roof cannot protect me much longer from the thunderbolt. . . . Oh, how hard it is to sit still and do nothing in the face of danger!"

My Return to Lyons

Everything being ready, my father and his three companions in misfortune started in the middle of the night for the frontier. It was a solemn moment, and how many terrible thoughts were hidden in that tranquil "Adieu!" with which we parted, for we felt that we must not weaken each other, and kept silent each on our own sorrow and fears. My father charged me with many loving messages for his sister; he seemed full of security, and I tried to appear equally hopeful. Ah, I was too much afraid for tears!

I also started at daybreak. I took with me a 20lb. loaf, some meat, peas, butter, and eggs, a little of each; and as my riches prevented me from going on foot I embarked with Madeleine and went to Lyons by water, arriving without accident, along with my provisions, which had caused me some anxiety. I found all as I had left it; Cantat had visited my aunt several times and told me she was well. As I was exceedingly anxious to see her and tell her about my father, I went at once to the prison, now the centre of all my thoughts. How often I had longed to be confined there along with my aunt! . . . My loneliness was so heavy a burden, my strength was so worn by fatigue, and my room was made odious to me by the presence of Forêt and the quarrels of the servants. There was peace for me only at my aunt's feet, and oh, how well I could have slept there!

The orders that day were not very strict, and my friends the warders, who supposed I had been ill, not only sent me in as soon as they could, but allowed Madeleine to enter with me. Her face grew very sad when she followed me into the prison, and presently it reflected her fear and disgust when she saw herself surrounded by criminals, wild-eyed and haggard, begging for alms. I must confess that only habit could temper the repulse they inspired. No doubt the poor wretches were unhappy, but they were allowed to take the air, while my innocent aunt was closely shut in.

At last the door was opened and I saw her again; she was not changed, but how long my absence had seemed to her! Several times she had been tortured with lying accounts of my father's arrest, sent in the hope of obtaining from her surprise and her grief some hint as to his hiding-place; it was a favourite means of dragging from the prisoners the information they had refused. We sat down side by side on her rolled-up mattress, giving the chair she had bought from the gaoler to Madeleine, whom my aunt looked on as a benefactress. How happy I was to be once more beside my second mother, to watch with admiration her serene courage, to look at her with veneration and love! I could think of no one else, while as to Madeleine, she was in a state of stupefaction that kept her silent and immobile, her eyes full of tears that she dared not shed, gazing about her almost without seeing anything. The sight of so many women huddled together in the straw, without distinction of rank and condition, of wealth and misery, of childhood and old age, sickness and health, virtue and vice; the whole spectacle, which she looked upon for the first time, stunned her with its horror.

Though I had no appetite I ate busily while I told my aunt all my news, for it was necessary not to seem too deeply interested. (There were spies even here, and we were so crowded that even a whisper might be overheard.) She learnt with joy of my father's departure, "though," she said, "with so many dangers about him, will he be able to escape in safety? And how long it will be before we can know what has become of him," she added, sighing. Thanks to the worthy Chozières, our dinner that day was better than usual, and we kept festival, though Madeleine ate nothing. As soon as we left the prison she returned to Fontaine, and I found myself once more alone; I had verily not one single friend to whom I might look for counsel or consolation. I must certainly have done many imprudent things, or what would have seemed

such to older and more cautious persons, for at fourteen years old one cannot be altogether wise! . . . but I was so completely cut off from all human help and support that Providence took pity on me and protected my youth and ignorance. I have already said that M. and Madame de Bellecise were under arrest in their own rooms, where their guardian allowed no one to enter; it was the same with Madame de Souligné, whose husband was in prison and was executed soon after. And these were my only friends!

I returned from prison worn out with the day's fatigue, only to find awaiting me the same quarrels, the same troubles as before. Citizen Forêt, sitting at my fireside, never moved from his armchair save when summoned by his wife; she kept up an endless flow of conversation, talking loudly and volubly of the executions, of the fine deeds of her son the Municipal, and the toilettes of her *fillâtre*, as she called her daughter-in-law. Old Forêt had possessed himself of my aunt's "Book of Hours," the big print of which he could read without spectacles; I was very much vexed about it, but dared not demand it back. He passed a part of each day in reading it; seeing which I took courage to repeat a prayer for peace every evening before he and his wife retired to their room. I put my whole soul into every word, and Forêt, folding his hands, joined with me heartily; even his virago of a wife prayed with us. When I read over the prayer now (it was in the *Heures des Noailles*, which belonged to my aunt; I have the book still), I feel how wonderfully I was protected by Heaven. To do such a thing at that time as pray openly was a temerity that might have led me to the guillotine, and what was worse, have seriously increased the dangerous position in which my aunt found herself; it was more than imprudence! But old Forêt not only listened to it with piety and respect, but asked for it if I were late in beginning, and seemed happy to have the chance

of once more praying to God; for indeed, if he had not been so weak and timid, I think he had the makings in him of a good man. He stood in awe of his son, he was afraid of his own wife: Citizeness Forêt, as he respectfully called her, tyrannised over him, and he bent under the yoke and obeyed her orders. One day, as I have already said, she worried him into going to see the executions. He, who was afraid of every trifle, came back in a state of mind that he often afterwards described to me—in a whisper not to be overheard: "I was in a high fever for three days and nights, and for a long time I dared not close an eye lest I should see all the heads—chasing me—how can people bear to look on at such things? Yet my son calls it a fine sight, and my wife is mad about it."

I continued my visits to the prison till they were stopped for a while by my falling ill from fatigue, anxiety, and want of nourishment. There was nothing further wrong with me than a collapse from sheer want of strength to live, eat, move, or even think; I was in bed eight days, utterly prostrated. My aunt was so uneasy about me that she begged the prison doctor to see me, and I remember that he was very gentle and sympathetic; he ordered me complete rest and some strengthening food, and went back to relieve my aunt's mind by an encouraging report. It was during this short illness that old Forêt received a visit from his son the Municipal. The curtains of my bed were almost entirely drawn, but I could see his red cap, and there was nothing to prevent me from hearing his harangue, which was in keeping with his blood-coloured head-gear. "If, father, you were not a good republican," he declared; "if I suspected you of sympathising with the aristocrats, I would denounce you and have you executed to-morrow."

"Son, son, don't say that! That is too hard surely!"

"How too hard? Learn that a good republican has neither father nor family; he only acknowledges the Republic, he only loves the Republic, to it he

sacrifices all else without hesitation and without delay!"

By the time that evening came old Forêt had not yet stopped trembling over this; I do not think he found such visits very agreeable.

It was also during this illness that I received a letter from my younger brother; I forget how it reached my hands. In it he told me that he had been recognised and denounced, but that he had escaped by swimming across the Rhône and was on his way to take refuge in Switzerland; my tears fell freely over this new anxiety, and I almost thanked Heaven for making me ill, so that at least I could weep in the shelter of my curtains, unseen, unspied.

As soon as I could stand on my feet, I set out for the prison; but just as I was going to cross the river by the flying bridge, I was stopped by the sentry. "Off with you to the guard-house!" he said.

"But why——?"

"You have no tricolour."[1]

I had indeed forgotten it. I had only a wrap about my head, and the tricolour was fixed permanently on my hat, which I was not wearing. I explained that I had been ill and was scarcely convalescent, and he took pity upon me; I was allowed to pass on condition that I bought a cockade at the first shop upon my route. After this I arrived without further accident at the Recluses, and succeeded in getting through the gate and the first of the inner doors; but when I got to the *grille* I found there was a new order, only one person being allowed to enter every half-hour, with the result that there was a file waiting which would certainly have taken the whole day to pass in. I was still too weak to stand long; so I retreated sorrowfully to a guard-house near the grating, to sit down and trust that some caprice of fortune would come to my help. Fortunately for me there were no soldiers

[1] Every woman had to wear this favour or cockade, and without it was not allowed to pass.

there. After a few minutes I saw a warder whom I knew (the one in charge of the grating was a stranger to me), and called out to him imploringly.

"Placot, Placot," I cried, "I am very unhappy! I have not seen my aunt for eight whole days, because I have been ill, and I am still too weak to wait in the file till my turn comes to get in. Must I go away without seeing my aunt?" I had scarcely finished speaking when he caught hold of me and placed me in front of him, almost in his arms, and advancing between the wall and the people waiting, he put me down close beside the grating.

"Here!" he said to his comrade in charge, "look at this little citizeness, how thin and puny and weak she is; she cannot wait like the others. You might let her pass in to see her aunt."

The gate opened a few inches, I made myself thinner than ever, and slipped through joyfully, running on at once so as to lose no more of my precious minutes with my aunt. One must have known what it is to wait at a prison gate, knocked about, abused, ill-treated, and too often sent away in the end, to realise the joy of success; and then the delight my arrival gave to my aunt repaid me in full for all the troubles that beset my coming. She was, however, very uneasy at my getting in without a regular order, as did so many others, and it seemed to her that some day we should have to suffer for it. I think myself that our clandestine entry into the prison was tolerated because it made our ruin the more complete, in forcing us to pay away the little that remained to us to buy the daily complaisance of two or three warders.

I do not know how it happened that there was at that time a certain amount of liberty allowed to the prisoners. The ladies were permitted to leave their rooms from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon, and to walk freely in the court; they were no longer obliged to pay three francs for every jug of water, since they could draw it for themselves at the

well. The men enjoyed the same liberty. It was in this manner that I first saw the sculptor Chinard, and I have regretted ever since that he did not make a portrait of my aunt, as he did of several of his companions in misfortune. I have been told that the little statuette of Reason, that I once saw in his cell, ultimately obtained his release for him.

Madame Milanès, a daughter of Madame de Bellecise, was also a prisoner at the Recluses, but up to now I had never seen her. She was one of twelve women shut up in a very small cell at the far end of the prison, where they suffered much from want of air and space; their strength was undermined by these and other privations, and they begged for leave to quit their chamber for a short time every day. After repeated petitions, this was granted to them; they were taken, six of them in the morning and six in the evening, to a little garden that lay below the windows of the room in which my aunt was confined. The soldiers who conducted them thither remained present during the promenade, and watched all that took place. This horrible surveillance ceased in some degree when all the prisoners were allowed to leave their rooms daily; one can imagine some of the disagreeables resulting from such a close confinement, but only those who have come through it know how hard they are to bear! Madame Milanès had preserved a cheerful and even gay spirit which made her a most consoling companion in these times of affliction; the very sight of her face, open and serene, did good to sad eyes and sore hearts. In spite of all her own great sorrows, she was still able to comfort others, and in tending her comrades, and endeavouring to rouse their courage, she kept up her own. Yet her husband had just been executed, and her children she knew were left helpless and absolutely alone in the world. Her strength, which never failed her, came from above.

If it was not given to every one to wear so sweet a courage as hers, I must say that all were marvellously

resigned, and I never once heard murmurs or complaints. The faces I saw about me were calm and tranquil, without tears and without any sign of despair; they were full of that serene repose which comes to those awaiting death. Each day was for some of them without a morrow, and there was no room for lesser thoughts in that great preoccupation. Prisoners were continually being taken away, and the others, looking on, said to themselves, "I must soon go too." . . . The one who went was embraced and blessed, the doors shut behind him, generally for ever; his friends listened to the sound of his footsteps, the echo of his voice, which they would never hear again. . . . In answer to the simple question, "How are you?" I often heard answer made, "Very well, while awaiting a promenade to the Brotteaux, or the honours of the guillotine;" and this was not a mere piece of bravado, but the tranquil acceptance of an inevitable end. Some young people had adopted the republican style of speaking to amuse themselves, and said "thee" and "thou" to every one;[1] but I never could answer them in the same way. Since I was obliged to use this custom to gaolers and people of the sort, I could no longer bear to say "thee" to any one else.

Just about this time the women were removed to another lodging, being redistributed in one large room and two closets. This set of apartments had but one entrance; a stove was in the principal chamber, to which each of the inmates could come in turn to warm her coffee. The top of it was covered with little pots and even with glass bottles which stood conveniently between the pots, and took up little space. My aunt, whose stoutness prevented her from stooping, arranged with a peasant-woman to make her bed, and roll up her mattress in the morning; it had been proposed,

[1] The second person singular, used officially in the time of the Revolution, has been omitted in the English version, as it conveys in our language nothing of the rudeness and contemptuous familiarity it expresses under such circumstances in French.—*Translator's note.*

as there was less space in this apartment than in their former one, that she should share her poor bed with another, but when she pointed out that she suffered terribly from rheumatism, this fresh vexation was spared her.

I think I have said already that she took dinner along with three other ladies, and that on every third or fourth day they contrived to dine off what was left over from the preceding meals. This arrangement was still continued, and the little company, consisting of Madame des Plantes, Mademoiselle Olivier, Mademoiselle Huette, and my aunt, clung together with an intimacy they did not extend to the other prisoners, as if they foresaw that they were shortly to share the same fate, and were never to be separated again. One day—an "economy" day, when I had arrived early—having passed a happy morning with my aunt, I had just begun to beat the eggs for my famous omelette when a great noise was heard, and the warders hurried through the corridors crying out, "The Temporary Commission has sent a Commissary to visit the prison." Marino, the terrible Marino, was coming.[1] "All who have come in without permission must be off at once."

The commotion was terrible. My aunt, in great alarm, wanted me to hurry away at once, but I was full of the ardour of my achievements, and for all response showed her my omelette. "I don't wear my freedom printed on my forehead," I added. "If I remain quietly in the crowd, there is no reason why he should not think I belong to the place." And stooping over my *chaufferette*, I went on with my cooking.

My plan, as it turned out, was the wisest I could have followed. Marino appeared at the door almost as I finished speaking, and advanced into the room where we were.

"How many here?" he asked abruptly.

[1] Marino, a member of the Temporary Commission, had been a Parisian painter on porcelain.

"Fifteen," replied my aunt. He did not count us, but examined some baskets of provisions.

"Let the rich provide for the poor," he said, looking at the peasant who made my aunt's bed. "If you have any complaints to make against these nobles, speak out."

She declared that she had no complaints to make against any one; and Marino, after uttering a few more fine republican maxims, went away. How glad I was to have escaped so easily, and how clever I thought myself for having had the sense to stay where I was! But my joy was short; for I was unfortunately not the only one who had remained, and I *was* the only one who had passed unobserved. The others, in endeavouring to avoid Marino's notice, by their very efforts attracted his argus eye to themselves, and his anger burst out immediately. Shouting with a fury which carried his words even to our ears, from abuse and menace he passed quickly to fulfilment. "Since they are so fond of being in prison," he yelled, "let them stay there! Then they will not need to hide from me when I come. . . . As for the warder on duty, eight days in the cells for him!"

Marino was big and strong, with a voice in keeping; it inspired a sort of terror in all who heard it, and every one kept silence in his presence. He went away, leaving fear and distress behind him, and the prisoners trembling for their friends. As for me, I confess with shame that my first thought was of joy. I was delighted to be shut up along with my aunt. I instantly conceived the happiness of being always with her; of seeing her the instant I woke; of sleeping at her feet. It was only when I remembered that she would then be dependent on paid service, and that I should be able to do nothing to help her, that for her sake I bitterly regretted that I was no longer free. My aunt was in despair; and profiting by the permission to go out and about the prison, she secretly negotiated my escape with some of the warders whom we knew, and

presently returned, relieved and consoled, to tell me of her success, which, I suspect, cost her dear.

I went out about six o'clock, when it was already dark, and found the street full of women, waiting anxiously for their relatives or mistresses, for they had heard we were to be detained. Happily Cantat was among them, and I reached my distant home in safety with her companionship; while the others who had been kept in the prison succeeded in leaving it during the night or on the following days. I am still convinced that these scenes were got up to exhaust our resources, and drag from us the money that they had not been able to take away already. Probably they laughed in their sleeves over the fright that all the commotion and fury had given us; and they were so avid of new emotions, and so sick of the unceasing tragedies of every day, that I suspect they enjoyed these little comedies.

CHAPTER XI

An audience of Marino, member of the Temporary Commission—My aunt is removed from the Recluses to the prison of Saint-Joseph—Execution of thirty-two citizens of Moulins—Life at the prison of Saint-Joseph—Continual alarms—Firm and resigned spirit of my aunt—The prisoners are transferred to the Hôtel de Ville.

WHEN I left the prison that night and saw the grating close behind me, I sighed very deeply, for this was not an ordinary leave-taking, my aunt having insisted that I should not return without a regular permit. "Try to get one," she said; "the risks you run upset me too much, and I would rather deny myself the joy of seeing you than undergo these frightful anxieties. Be brave, and God will help you."

Indeed, I had sore need of the courage she tried to instil into me. How and where was I to obtain an order? Should I ever see her again?

The next day I went to the Temporary Commission which sat at that time in the Maison Imbert, situated in a street neighbouring the Place des Terreaux. I had not passed through this part of the town for a long time. I found the Terror reigning there undisguised. The guillotine that had been erected to begin with in the Place de Bellecourt was now in full activity in the Place des Terreaux, and already on reaching the Place de Saint-Pierre, I could see the running stream of its victims' blood. I stepped over it trembling, full of a profound veneration, chilled with a sickening fear. I would have liked to kneel down beside it. O God! My aunt's blood was to flow there also. . . . Passing close by the scaffold, so

solidly built that it suggested its hard service, I soon found myself in the antechamber of this famous Commission, amongst many other persons who were waiting, like myself, to catch Marino in passing. It was forbidden to enter the hall of the Commission without being specially called thither, and a great deal of time was wasted in that antechamber, from which people were often turned out without having succeeded in that which they had come for. The citizen concierge generally tried to get rid of every one, but only met with resistance, and the crowd steadily increased. Ultimately he would go and fetch Marino to take the matter in hand, and it must be said that he cleared the room admirably.

Three days in succession I went at six o'clock in the morning, the hour at which the office was opened, and waited till ten without once seeing Marino. It was he who gave out the permits, but he never passed through the room where we were, making use, I suppose, of some private entrance. To wait for him there was a snare and a delusion, but what mattered our fatigue or our tears or our suspense? Whenever I begged to be allowed to speak to him I was told to wait, "he's coming soon!"

During the time I spent in this room I saw many unfortunate people of every age, sex, and quality. There were foreigners, soldiers, travellers of all sorts. I have often wondered what became of them. I remember one officer who seemed to be of superior rank, who was there for the simple purpose of having his passport countersigned, vainly demanding that it should be given back to him, repeating that his mission was important, and his time short; furious at such a delay, he strode up and down muttering angrily to himself, "They are making fools of us; under the *ci-devant* tyrant, at least they did not keep us hanging about like this!"

On the evening of the third day the crowd had become so great that at last the concierge went in search

of the terrible Marino. He was a tall, strong man, with a stentorian voice, who made his presence known by a volley of republican oaths, which he followed up by shouting at us—

"If you have come to demand permits for the prisons, I may tell you that you will get none without a doctor's certificate, attesting that the prisoner is ill; and observe this, that if the doctor gives such a certificate out of base complaisance, he and the bearer will both go to prison, while the prisoner will be guillotined."

After this short harangue, made in such terms that I cannot transcribe it literally, the crowd gradually melted away, Marino hurrying it with voice and gesture. One lady alone ventured to accost him, saying something that I could not hear.

"Who are you?"

She gave her name.

"What! You dare to pronounce the name of a traitor in such a spot as this? Out you go!" and pushing her by the arm, he kicked her out of the door.

I will not try to describe what we felt; we were breathless. And it was across this pause of general stupefaction that I heard a voice break upon the silence that succeeded Marino's outburst—the voice of Saint-Jean, who accompanied me. He desired to attract notice to himself either because he was tired of waiting or through an ill-considered zeal. "Citizen," he said distinctly, "I beg you to attend to the little citizeness yonder."

How I trembled at this cruel indiscretion! I had purposely withdrawn as far as I could to escape the storm, and to wait for a quieter moment.

"Who are you, who speak like that?" Marino demanded abruptly.

"I came," returned Saint-Jean with hesitation, "I came with the little citizeness in order that she should not be alone."

"Learn," said Marino imperiously, "that here she

is under the protection of law and justice, and that no one has the right to protect any one else. Out you go!" And as Saint-Jean did not immediately obey, "Out you go!" he roared, and catching him by the arm kicked him out in his turn. As to me, I kept quiet in my corner, making myself as small as possible. Presently there remained of all the crowd only two, myself and another of nearly the same age, and Marino, probably amazed at our audacity, came and regarded us with curiosity.

"Have you got certificates, then?" he inquired. We presented them in silence, and in a milder voice he told us to wait while he went back into his office. He had barely gone out when the other door opened, and Saint-Jean reappeared. "What are you thinking of?" I cried; "you will compromise me, you will ruin me!"

"Oh, I'm cold, I don't want to wait on the stair, I'd rather stay here!"

"Marigni," I said (for I dared not say Saint-Jean), "go home at once and I will come alone. Go at once, I beg of you, do not let him see you!" It was a long time before I could get him to obey me, but he went at last, and I only breathed easily when I saw the door shut behind him.

Shortly after Marino called us to his room to take our names and addresses in order to verify our petitions, and ordered me to go to his house on the day after the following at eight o'clock in the morning. When I went there, however, I had great difficulty in getting in; it was only by insisting that I had come by his direct order that I was allowed to cross his threshold. Marat's death had made his comrades very uneasy, and a child was enough to inspire them with fear. I was, however, very well received, he seemed scarcely the same man; his voice was gentle and his manners courteous. He gave me the permit that I had so longed for, and I came away full of joy and hope.

As soon as I had got my treasure I set off for the Recluses, for it was five days since I had seen my aunt. The prison gates opened to let me pass, but what a surprise awaited me! I found my aunt in the court with all her companions on the point of being transferred to Saint-Joseph. Each with a packet of her effects under her arm, they were making preparations to quit their melancholy dwelling, when at the last moment the gaoler interfered and forbade them to take away their belongings. It was with difficulty that they obtained permission to keep their bundles. As to their mattresses, blankets, and sheets, and such furniture as they had been able to buy from him, he retained them, and no doubt sold them over again to others, who in their turn would be obliged to leave them in his hands.

I followed the prisoners to Saint-Joseph only to find that I could not enter, my permit being solely for the Recluses. "What a loss of time!" I cried sorrowfully; "how long it will be before I can see her again!" As a matter of fact I had to wait two more days in that waiting-room, and the third would have passed as fruitlessly if the concierge had not got tired of us. He went in search of Marino to clear the room, and the scene was as stormy as before; I stood aside to let the crowd pass, and was the last to present myself.

"What, you again!" he said impatiently; "what do you want now?"

I replied in as soft a voice as I could muster, and making excuses for my involuntary importunity, I explained what had happened. "Have pity on me, citizen, I have not seen my aunt for such a long time, and I have been waiting here for three endless days!"

He took me immediately into his office and countersigned my order for Saint-Joseph. "Take it and run away," he said, and I obeyed him without delay. The next day I was in my aunt's arms.

This removal was a misfortune, and a dangerous

step forward. We were forced into new expenses in order to gain friends at Saint-Joseph; and this prison being still more distant than the other, made the coming and going very tiring and difficult. It seemed to me that with this change all hope of being set at liberty vanished; I had still dreamt that it might be possible at the Recluses, though my aunt herself never entertained the idea. In the early days of her detention, when the prisoners were very crowded, it had happened that one of the warders, thinking she was a visitor, took her by the arm to push her out of the door. "Oh why, why did you not let him do it!" I cried in inexpressible distress, and she answered calmly, "I walk badly, I know nobody. Where could I have gone? I would soon have been retaken and then ill-treated, and perhaps my companions would have been made to suffer."

A few days later, as it happened, a thief contrived to escape, and the vigorous measures taken on this account harassed all the prisoners alike. This was only one of the drawbacks caused by the mixed company, and a walk in the courtyard was not accomplished without danger, when they went out pell-mell with the heroes of the highway to breathe the half-fetid air. While one rejoiced to see a little patch of sky overhead, these gentlemen emptied one's pockets . . . it was in this way that my aunt lost her pocket-book. I cannot but admire the skill with which all was made to work towards our ruin.

It was while she was in the Recluses that my aunt formed the project of sending me away from Lyons. Having lost all hope for herself, and having resigned herself to the sacrifice of her life, her one preoccupation was to see me safe, and, on pretence of an important piece of business that required the presence of one of us at Paris, she tried to make me promise to go thither with Madame des Plantes as soon as she was liberated. This promise, however, I never gave. It would have been impossible for me to abandon my aunt, but all

my resistance could not make her give up this hateful plan. Madame des Plantes, as I have said, had married the only officer who escaped from the Pierre-Cise massacre; this placed her in considerable danger, but nevertheless, counting perhaps on some friendly influence, she always expected to be set at liberty. My aunt, thinking only of the dangers to which I was exposed in Lyons, anxiously looked forward to her departure. I do not know what arrangements had been made between the two ladies, for I carefully avoided asking questions on this painful matter. Providence, however, forbade its execution, and saved me the sorrow of disobeying my aunt. I could not but be amazed at her perfect forgetfulness of self, at the greatness of her love which made itself a shield for me, which said, "So long as you are saved I fear neither suffering, nor abandonment, nor death!" . . . This journey, as I have said, was never undertaken, for Madame des Plantes followed my aunt to the scaffold; but the project served to occupy some of their sad hours; it was a precious hope alike to her who dreamt of liberty for herself and to the other who, at the point of death, had no care but the safety of the orphan she must leave behind her.

I can understand her uneasiness now, but I did not then realise that there existed any particular danger for me. I had not observed that the number of young girls who visited the Recluses had greatly diminished; for their mothers, unwilling to expose them to the bold looks and rough treatment of those in authority, had contrived to send them out of reach. I no longer saw my friend Rose Milanès at the prison gate; and my aunt, sharing the anxiety of the other ladies, wished to follow their example, but forgot that they belonged to the town, and had many resources that were not available for a stranger. If my absence had been necessary for her ease of mind, I would have stayed away, but I should still have watched over and provided for her comforts as far as it was possible for me

to do so. Was it not the best part of my life? Could I have borne the idea of separating myself from her? Suffering was nothing to me so long as I could feel that I was suffering with, and for, her; even those long hours of waiting at the gate were not without their sweetness . . . we, who met there, were all of the same family of misfortune; the men in hiding or in flight, the very children trusted with important secrets which they never betrayed. Indeed, protected by their innocence, they often succeeded in discomfiting the plans of our tyrants; for in every child there is a man's soul, and misfortune awakens it.

It was during my aunt's detention at the Recluses that thirty-two persons were brought from Moulins to Lyons to be executed. I have always been sorry that I did not try to see them; for I belonged to their own town, and they might have wished to confide in me. I had the idea of endeavouring to reach them, but I put it aside, for I knew no one at the prison of Roanne where they were confined, and I was all that remained to my aunt. I did not dare to risk an indiscretion that might have deprived her of the only person left who could do anything for her.

On the day of their execution, Citizeness Forêt came as usual to entertain me with an account of the spectacle which she still passionately enjoyed; she was full of admiration for the fine appearance of my unfortunate fellow-townspeople. The hatred of the Moulins Jacobins had been so hot and bitter that they had not allowed their prisoners to languish in the cellars of the Hôtel de Ville, before sending them up to the Temporary Commission; thus they were all in full strength and health. The two MM. Tourret were particularly remarked for their handsome faces and figures, and distinguished themselves by their courage, though that was shared by them all, save one. The elder M. Tourret was heard to remonstrate with this one, as they came down the steps of the Hôtel de Ville. And they were going to their death! . . . So many

feelings must at such a moment fill a man's heart, that it may be the body trembles even when the soul is firm. . . . I heard later that they had thrown a large quantity of assignats into a brazier, but some of the other prisoners had saved a portion to their own profit.

I wished to hide this news from my aunt, but I found she had heard of it: she even asked me to find out their names, as we only knew one or two of them. The only means I had of doing so was to send at nightfall to tear down one of the lists hanging at the corner of the street, and to take it to her the next morning. It contained some of the worthiest names of our province. . . . At the Recluses I never saw but one person from Moulins, M. Ripond, the banker. He was there but a short time; my aunt got leave to see him in the gaoler's room where he dined, and I went with her. Those who could afford to pay, and dearly, for this miserable meal, begged eagerly for the favour of being allowed to sit at the long, narrow, dirty table; they were at least out of their rooms for a while, and they hoped that during the repast, Fillon[1] (as I think he was called) might let fall some words on the events of the day, from which they might draw enlightenment. It is in the nature of mankind to wish to *know;* uncertainty wears out soul and body, whereas a known evil can always be supported. As to M. Ripond, he had not long to wait, as he very shortly perished.[2]

What a time it was! The town was a picture of destruction; in every quarter buildings were being pulled down. This gave occupation to a dangerous class always apt to rebel as soon as it is hungry. The fine façade of the Place de Bellecourt was disappearing under these ruthless hands, and as the adjacent streets were also being demolished, the only way of passing

[1] The gaolers of the principal Lyons prisons were all brought from Paris, in order to more completely isolate the prisoners.

[2] He resisted the executioner, and bit him,—at least so it was said.

was by the Place itself. My heart began to beat violently whenever I was forced to approach the long line of workers that sometimes stretched right across it; a double row of men, women, and children gaining their livelihood easily by passing from hand to hand a stone or tile, without hurrying too much, lest there should be no employment for them next day. As soon as I asked leave to cross the line I was recognised by means of my basket and stopped.

"Aha! an aristocrat carrying food to the traitors in prison! . . . Come, work, that's better than feeding serpents. Here, take this."

I was given my stone or what not to pass on like the rest, and felt myself lucky when it was not a heavy basket of earth, or when I could get rid of my task in a reasonable time, and hasten away from the vile jokes that shocked my ears.

The Place de Bellecourt added a deeper sadness to my daily life: I have already said that I could not avoid crossing it. During the first weeks of my aunt's captivity, it was there that the guillotine stood, and whether it was that the hours of executions were not yet definitely settled, or whether they were liable to change, I do not know; but once when I had waited to set out till the terrible mid-day was past, I was unfortunate enough to pass by just as an execution was taking place. In spite of the danger incurred by showing the slightest disapprobation, I fled, with my head turned aside, unheeding of Cantat's remonstrances; my feet were winged, and yet my flight was not rapid enough. Seven times I heard the cry, "Long live the Republic!" and seven heads fell in the midst of the clamour of the maddened crowd, that was happily too much engrossed to observe my flight and my horror. Otherwise I should have been dragged near the scaffold, and forced, in spite of myself, to look on. Another time, and still later in the day, I met some unfortunates who, we were told, were to be burnt, to vary a spectacle that repetition ren-

dered monotonous. When the guillotine was removed to the Place des Terreaux, the ditch which had been opened to catch the blood of the innocent victims was filled in; but the earth refused to hide it, and it reappeared on the surface to cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance. This spot, opposite the Rue Dominique, remained for a long time red, and by an involuntary respect, it was avoided by the passers by.

The doors of the prison of Saint-Joseph were at last opened to me, and I found the ladies lodged at the far end of a big courtyard in a building that consisted of two very large rooms, quite cut off from the rest of the prison, and without any windows—a little grating in the door admitted a thin shaft of light and air. In one of these chambers were beds for such as could pay for them; in the other, the inmates were huddled together on some straw. My aunt, in order to avoid sharing her couch, chose one of the three small iron beds that were in the room; but as a compensation for the favour of sleeping alone, the three ladies who chose these had the worst places of the chamber. Their beds stood under the opening of an enormous chimney, stopped up as well as might be with straw, which did not prevent both cold and damp from reaching them. My aunt's infirmities increased greatly, and from this time she suffered from rheumatic pains in the head, which caused her violent suffering. There were fifteen beds in this room, and no fire to purify the air; once more the *chaufferettes* became the sole resource of the prisoners. Every evening they were locked in; every morning their door was opened, and they were at liberty to move as they pleased about the high-walled courtyard. The room that they occupied had a peculiarity that I never saw anywhere else; its ceiling was composed of a mat of innumerable spiders' webs. These patient spinners had toiled no doubt for years in the undisturbed humidity of this dark and unhealthy chamber, and they had produced a sort of tent that hung down to nearly half the height of

the room like a reversed dome, or rather a shroud ready to enwrap those beneath it for the grave. It was not possible to look up at it without disgust, and the solidity of its texture testified to the number and size of the workers who had wrought it. The prisoners in vain implored the gaoler to clean the ceiling; he only consented at last when they offered to pay for it themselves. Thereupon he sent some of the criminals, who, for a' high price, removed the unpleasant inhabitants and their labour of years, to be burnt together in the courtyard.

Madame Milanès had a separate room at Saint-Joseph, as she had had at the Recluses, and shared it with the same companions. As before, they were brought to the courtyard twice a day; but here they were allowed to stay longer each time, and to benefit by the air, the exercise, and the access to the well. Round this well was a favourite gathering-place—the sound of the running water seemed to give life to the courtyard, in which all else was dead or dying—and such meetings were a great joy to the prisoners, who could exchange their hopes and fears, and such news as might reach them. When a visitor was admitted, it was in the courtyard that she was allowed to see her friend or relative; and such an arrival was the cause of quite a stir, as all the inmates pressed about her to ask questions, and to learn what they could. Even when the stranger's ignorance or prudence prevented her from satisfying their curiosity, the mere sight of a fresh face was a delight in itself, a happy break in the monotony of the day.

Sometimes also other prisoners were brought there for a few hours, and these hours were promptly followed by death. Amongst these was a good nun, the most serenely tranquil woman I ever met. Deprived of all resources, and with nothing to live on, she went to the municipality to ask for the pension which the law allotted to her. "Have you taken the oath?" she was asked.

"No."

"Then you have no right to anything. Take the oath, and you shall be provided for."

"I cannot take it."

"If you refuse, you will be sent to prison!"

"Very well; send me to prison."

One of the men, either wishing to trap her or really touched by her innocence, said to her, "Listen; you need only make a pretence of taking the oath, you need say nothing. I will write it down, and you will be saved."

"I cannot save myself by a lie!"

She was brought to Saint-Joseph, where she was received with delight by three other nuns; they passed the night in prayer, and in the morning repeated together the prayers for the dying. In the midst of these she was fetched away, and at mid-day she was dead.

My aunt daily joined in the prayers of the good nuns who lodged in the same room with her. . . . She was of a delicate constitution; her education had polished her wit rather than cultivated her reason, and, mixing very early in society, she enjoyed it both by habit and by taste. Her gifts made her much admired, and obtained for her a leading place; play, conversation, worldly-wisdom, society duties, all became for her a serious matter for study, and one in which she made great progress. There was no more successful hostess, she had not her equal for gaiety and wit; but her remarkable power of repartee, her great ease and vivacity in speaking, and her brilliance in conversation made her sometimes to be dreaded, for she could never resist the pleasure of making a witty speech. "I had rather apologise afterwards," she would say. "How could I keep it back? It was too amusing." . . . But apologies did not always mend the matter; her phrases were too biting, they made a portrait too striking, carried ridicule too convincingly, and left wounds that were not easy to heal, and for

which some never forgave her. Thus her very talents obscured her good heart. She kept open house, and almost always had people about her, especially in the evening, when she gave the reins to her quick wit, and when her vivacious gaiety delighted her hearers. She used to say that these hours were the happiest of her day. Independent and possessed of considerable fortune, she was able to indulge her liking for the luxuries of life; her table was abundantly and daintily supplied, and she assembled round it the best and most brilliant society in Moulins. She was, in short, essentially a woman of the world, devoted to society and excelling in it. . . . If I enlarge on an existence so superficial, it is only in order the better to tell what she became when misfortune touched her, tearing away the veils of convention and education, and displaying all the beauty of her great and noble soul.

No sooner was our family overwhelmed by adversity, than my aunt absorbed herself in us. Lifted above herself, as it were, she scarcely seemed to perceive the privations from which she suffered;[1] the distresses and constraints of such a captivity never once drew a complaint from her, and in perfect contentment, desiring nothing, resenting nothing, she gave herself up to the fate Providence had sent her. I never saw her uneasy, even for a single moment, on her own account. All her anxieties were for us, for my father and his children; she looked upon us as a charge entrusted to her, and she bent all her energies and her thoughts to preserving us from danger. In order to avoid my attracting notice and running the risk of being arrested also, she had forbidden me to ask for anything for her, and opposed herself determinedly to any plan of entreating her liberation

[1] I do not think I need to apologise for repeating myself on this theme. My readers have only to put themselves in my place; they will readily understand how my love and deep veneration lead me to insist on the praise due to this most praiseworthy woman.

which might have brought me before the authorities. The bitterness displayed against my father was so great that she dreaded lest the same blind fury should fall on me; she desired that I should remain unnoticed, unknown. As to herself, her sacrifice was made.

The ladies were shut up every evening, as soon as it began to grow dark, in the two big chambers separated from each other by a thick wall, and without any means of communication; once under lock and key, those in the one room could neither see nor hear their friends in the other. The gaoler having counted them over, withdrew in all security of mind; for it was impossible for them to escape. But one night, when sleep had come to calm the pain of their misfortunes and to bring forgetfulness, they were suddenly awakened by a terrible noise coming from the other chamber. Cries and groans, and repeated knocks on the door, combined to terrify them; they rushed to the little grating in their window, which was their only means of seeing out, to discover whether the executioners were there, whether a massacre was commencing. But the courtyard was perfectly quiet and undisturbed; the darkness and the silence contrasted strangely with the outcry from the neighbouring chamber. Seized with terror at the idea of a near danger so vague and so unknown, they united their cries to those of their companions; and working themselves up into a sort of frenzy as the sounds from the other room died away, they succeeded in making themselves heard by the gaoler. He arrived to find the room full of half-dead women. They were suffocating; the vapour from a small charcoal stove had absorbed the little air that entered through the *grille* in the door. Madame de Cléricault was, I think, the first to lose consciousness; her companions held her, as long as they could, close to the little grating through which entered all the air that came to them, but soon they themselves lost all power, and had help not arrived

when it did, they would all have perished. However, when they were carried into the courtyard, they presently recovered; but the stove was not lit again, as can well be imagined. My aunt told me in the morning of their night of terror. "A little air and a little water—and we were all right again," she said; "so little is necessary to existence, after all."

I grew more accustomed to Saint-Joseph than I had ever been to the Recluses; it was further away, but I was certain of entering, and when once I embraced my aunt, I forgot all my fatigue. We walked together in the courtyard which, though bare, was large enough to permit of a certain privacy, so that we could speak freely without fear of being overheard; we listened to the music of the dropping water beside the well; we lived, we felt, we thought, in unison. Shut out from all the world, I delighted in sharing with her the small pleasures which were still left to us; and which had for me so sad a charm, so sorrowful a joy. My aunt was my only thought, she was my life itself; I went away every night already counting on seeing her in the morning, and my fears had by force of habit given way to a sort of security. I did not think that any day would be different from its predecessor . . . . till one morning I was struck as if by a thunderbolt, at these words—"She is no longer here; she has been taken to the Hôtel de Ville."[1]

Those who did not live then, and there, cannot understand the terror of these words: "Taken to the Hôtel de Ville!" The revolutionary tribunal sat in this fine building, whose vast cellars served

[1] The Hôtel de Ville is a fine piece of architecture. There was at this time a public passage through it from the Place des Terreaux to the Place de la Comédie, which facilitated the escape of several prisoners. The cellars, transformed into cells, received in succession thousands of unfortunates who passed from them to the hands of the executioners; though some were actually overlooked and ultimately were liberated. The cellars to the left were known as the *bad cells*, those to the right as the *good cells*, although these also too often led to the guillotine; still, some hope remained for the prisoners who were confined in them.

as temporary prisons for such as were called to appear before the judges; and the words were in themselves almost a sentence of death. The sanguinary Tribunal looked on every prisoner as guilty, and had it not been for the pressure of necessity or some inner fear which made them cling to a pretence of justice, they would never have proclaimed the innocence of a single one among them!

CHAPTER XII

The Hall of Audience—I see my aunt there—List of the liberated—My aunt is not among them—She is taken to the "bad cells"—I appeal to Parcin and Corchant—All is vain—My aunt is executed—Her last letter—Mesdames de Bellecise and Milanès.

My aunt at the Hôtel de Ville! I dared not let myself think of the future, for the present was too terrible, and perhaps there would be no to-morrow. My God! *You* know what I suffered.

I went at once to the Hôtel de Ville, where my permit obtained an entrance for me, and found my aunt in the Hall of Commerce, which adjoined the Revolutionary Tribunal on the first storey, and from the windows of which one looked out over the Place des Terreaux and the guillotine that stood there. She was in the midst of her former companions and a great many other prisoners, who had either been already interrogated or were just about to be so. I do not know what I said to her; I clung to her for a long time. It seemed to me that I dared not breathe or even think, lest I should attract the danger and precipitate it upon us.

What a crowd there was in this great room, emptied of all its furniture and spread with a thick layer of straw, trampled almost into dust by a multitude of unfortunate feet! Here every tie to the world seemed broken and forgotten, and the short and anguished stay that the prisoners made was but a stepping-stone between life and death; each was oppressed by the burden of his fate, and tortured by his fears and hopes and, worst of all, his uncertainty. My aunt

had already appeared before the terrible Tribunal, and had been accused of fanaticism,[1] of having encouraged her brother in his act of rebellion, and of having used her influence in his favour. After a few insignificant questions, she was dismissed, and the interrogatory went on rapidly. I myself heard the prisoners called up in succession, and noted how quickly they returned. The judges lost no time over their work! The accused were left in ignorance of their fate,[2] but before long their uncertainty was to be relieved. In the midst of this anxious crowd I recognised the sculptor Chinard whom I had seen at the Recluses; he was striding up and down, and in his excitement as the decisive moment approached, went faster and faster, knocking against all who were in his way, and seeing no one. He was so absorbed in himself that he spoke as if he were alone. "Shall I be set free at last? Shall I really pass these doors? Is it life that awaits me, or still these prison walls, or else . . . " and his eyes travelled across the Place des Terreaux and rested on the guillotine.

I saw also the girl whom we called the "woman-soldier." She was a good creature and a capital soldier, as I have been told. She had dressed herself in the uniform of her lover when he was killed by her side, determined to avenge him and to replace him at his post. Every one esteemed her courage; but that day I saw her tremble.[3] Poor Madame de Saint-Fons was in extreme agitation, and to any one who had had the time and the calmness to observe her closely

[1] On account of a small book of prayers found in her pocket.

[2] When the accused was to be shot the President of the Tribunal touched his forehead; when he was to be guillotined the President touched the axe which hung on his breast. If he laid his hand on the registers open before him, the prisoner was to be set free. It can easily be conceived that these signs (which the accused did not know) were frequently given indistinctly, or were misunderstood by those who had to carry out the sentences, and in this way many lives were lost. Let me hope that by the same chance some were saved!

[3] Her oaths and gestures delighted her judges, and she was acquitted.

the critical state of her mind[1] would have been easily apparent; but the greater number of the ladies were calm and resigned, awaiting their fate in silence. However, by some means or another, the destiny of a few of the accused presently became known, and some of the ladies learnt that they were saved. I shall never forget the contrast between those faces lit up with new hope and the others which had lost all! The people were already crowding the Place des Terreaux to welcome and acclaim the liberated. . . . My aunt was convinced she was not of the number. "I know," she said, "that a great many women are to perish this 'decade,' and I shall be one of them." I tried to combat this idea, but in vain; it was hard enough to persuade myself that it was impossible—impossible! that she should die. I can still see her, calm and resigned like her companions in misfortune, her expression one of perfect serenity. People thronged about us, but she did not observe them; she had eyes for no one but me, and I saw none but her. So deep a sorrow filled her face, yet so infinite a sweetness; love stronger than death! . . . I saw none but her; and yet a veil seems to cover those last moments, and I can no longer recall her words; at such a time, indeed, little is said.

"You will come back when the others have been set free," were her last words; "you will bring me my dinner—yourself——" She was standing near the door, looking at me so tenderly and pitifully, embracing me. Dear God, was that last look a blessing? Why, why was I thrust out of that door, that shut her away from me? I never saw her again.

The gaoler added the last touch to my despair by tearing up my permit.

"It is no good now; you cannot come in again with it," he declared. It seemed that he had only let me enter before through some unusual compassion.

[1] She lost her reason on hearing her sentence, and by exception was sent to a hospital.

"Then let me go back and I will stay there," I cried, throwing myself against the door that separated me from her—for ever! "Let me go back and see her once more!" But it was never to open for me again. I was pushed away, and drifting with the crowd into the antechamber of the tribunal, I was again driven off. All was ended.

A great part of the rest of the day is a blank in my memory. I was conscious of but one thought, "I shall never see her again!" and beside that, nothing else seemed of any consequence. Saint-Jean went to see the prisoners set free (those who were acquitted), and came back in sorrowful silence, not daring to tell me that she was not among them. But I needed to ask no questions. I felt already that she was to die. I was utterly overwhelmed.

In the evening Madame de Bellecise sent to bid me go up to her to see her daughter, Madame Milanès, who had been one of those set free that morning, but my heart swelled almost to bursting at the thought. "No, no," I cried, "I will not, I will *not!* What has my poor aunt done that she should not be set free too?" and an immense bitterness filled my soul. Suddenly I saw at my side the beautiful old face of Madame de Bellecise, so radiant with peace and tenderness that she was a veritable angel of consolation; she had obtained permission from her guardian to come down to me, in my abandonment and isolation. Her kind eyes vanquished my resistance. At her entreaties I went with her, though most unwillingly, and feeling in the bitterness of my sorrow as if it were an added cruelty so to constrain me. Yet it was Madame Milanès' good heart that led her to ask for me, and she would have come to seek me herself had she not been afraid of my guardian; she was obliged by her position to be exceedingly circumspect, and to avoid everything that might attract a dangerous attention to her. At sight of her I cried bitterly, and she too wept, knowing the isolation in

which I was to be left; her pity had something maternal in it, which softened my heart, and she comforted me by pointing out that there was still some room for hope, since many prisoners made a long stay at the Hôtel de Ville, and yet were eventually released. She told me that she would hear of all that went on there, and would let me know in time to do what I could to save my aunt, "for you must make every effort possible," she said. I went to bed more tranquilly when I felt that there was still something left for me to do for the only person whom I loved.

Early in the morning Madame Milanès' maid came to seek me; she was a person of great intelligence and activity, acquainted with many of those now in authority, and thus able to render her mistress important services. She told me that my aunt had been transferred during the night to the "bad cells."

"Then there is no more hope?" I cried.

"To-day, at any rate," she responded, "there will be no executions; the regiment and the revolutionaries from Paris have refused to serve together, and have been fighting each other. This ensures nothing being done to-day; come, you must profit by it and try to see Parcin." Parcin was the President of the Tribunal. I followed her to the Quai Saint-Clair, where he lived; it was said that before he became a *terrorist*, he had been a humble and unskilful cobbler.

We waited in the courtyard of his house along with a great many other women of all ranks, come no doubt on the same sad errand. We were not allowed free approach to the "great men" in those days, and had to content ourselves with waiting on the chance of seeing him, when presently an officer came rapidly down the stair and walked away at a great pace. "Is it Parcin?" cried several voices. "No," replied a man stationed there to bar the way to us; "it is the Commandant of the station."

"Run after him quickly," my companion whispered

to me; "I know him, it is Parcin; it is true enough to say that he is the Commandant, and he does not wish to be recognised."

I had difficulty in catching him up, he went so quickly; and breathless with running, at first I could scarcely speak. As he would not stop, I caught him by the arm, and running beside him, I poured out all my distress. "She is not guilty, you have taken her for somebody else, if you would only examine her again! Give her back to me, she is innocent, give her back to me! . . . I am an orphan. I have no one but her; what shall I do without her? She is my second mother, I owe her everything, she is all that I have left. She is innocent; ask her again and you will see for yourself. . . . Oh, give her back to me, she is innocent, innocent!"

I could only speak in broken phrases, for breathlessness and my tears had choked my voice. His face was utterly impassive. Though I watched him closely I could perceive no trace of emotion in it, and he did not once look at me, nor did he say anything save, "I will see." I redoubled my entreaties; "I will see." Thrusting me away from him he increased his speed and soon vanished.

When I was rejoined by my companion, she took me to the house of Corchant, one of the judges of the Tribunal, where we found it easier to obtain entrance. He was occupied in shaving himself; he had the reputation of being softer-hearted than his comrades, but he too replied to my prayers and entreaties by no other words than, "We will see." Leaving him, we found it impossible to gain access to any of the other judges; I went therefore to Marino, who received me kindly and refused me all. "This business has nothing to do with me," he said.

"Can you not ask them to have pity on me?" I begged in the midst of tears; but he was not to be persuaded. I spent the whole day in the street, wandering round the Hôtel de Ville; Madame Milanès

had written me a petition to give to Parcin, and catching him at the corner of a street, I delivered it. "I will see" . . . was all his answer. . . . At last in the evening I went to the offices of the Temporary Commission, and waited as usual in the antechamber, in the midst of the gross pleasantries of the soldiers on duty. "Are you crying for your lover? We will soon find you another." . . . One of them approached me—ah! what bitterness was mingled with my sorrow!—when I heard the words, "Here is Citizen Parcin" . . . It was for him that I was waiting, and I had already been to seek him at his house.[1] I wished to entreat him once more; "It is my aunt, it is her life that I implore of you! You must give her back to me—she is all I have; or else let me die with her!"

He only answered me by a conventional phrase: "As a private man I pity you; as a public man I can do nothing." And then he turned his back on me without the least sign of compassion. Yet this man to whom I prayed, this man who had sat at my father's table, this man whom I had approached without fear,—this man it was who had had my aunt arrested, who had replied "Let her perish!" to those who had said to him, "We find nothing against her, and she is your fellow-citizen." "Let her perish," he repeated; "she is a hateful aristocrat, and the Republic must be purged of all such. Let her die!" This was the man whom I entreated with such confidence and intensity![2] My tears fell, I said to him all that came into my heart; I spoke without hesitation

[1] I found him soddened, as it were, with drunkenness, his eyes half shut, red and swollen; worn out by his excesses, no doubt he could no longer sleep. He received me without rudeness, but refused me all I asked. (*Trans. note.*—These references to Parcin seem contradictory, and suggest that the name has been repeated by error for another.)

[2] I discovered later that he was literally her assassin. I never saw him again. I have never yet in all these years learnt to understand the frenzy, the rage for killing that was then so widespread. It was like a tiger killing and rending his prey for the mere pleasure of killing and rending, and maddened by the sight of blood to yet wilder desires. It was the drunkenness of blood. God preserve us from ever seeing it again!

and without fear. Alas! in so much misery there was nothing left for me to fear.

The next morning I was early at the Hôtel de Ville, placing myself at the foot of the stair leading to the Tribunal. I hoped to see the judges as they passed by; but they never came, and I suppose they had a private entrance which enabled them to avoid those who waited for a last appeal to them. While I was there, however, a man signed to me to follow him apart, after he had first asked my name. I followed him at a distance, my heart beating violently, hoping that he was going to take me to see her; but I was mistaken. We reached the third storey, where my guide made me enter a small room looking towards the courtyard, and after making sure that we were alone and that we were not watched, he gave me my aunt's knife and her housewife, which she had sent to me and which, he said, had been handed to him by a person whom he did not know. Thus she felt I was near her, she divined that I was within reach, to be easily found. . . . I received these precious souvenirs with joy, and begged again and again to be secretly admitted to the cell, to be allowed to see her once more.[1] He was mute to all my questions, deaf to my prayers, and would not even carry a message to her for me. . . . I kissed the things that my aunt's hand had touched so short a time before, grateful to find even so little compassion, thankful that any one should be willing to sweeten our adversities with a little kindness. Perhaps, though he would promise nothing, this man did after all succeed in seeing my aunt and carrying her my messages; perhaps he took her the only consolation that remained to her in saying, "I have seen her, she loves you, she is very unhappy—she is praying for you."

During the whole of this terrible morning,[2] I never

[1] Some persons did succeed in obtaining entrance even to the "bad cells," at the cost of a small fortune. I had none to give!

[2] Twenty-second Pluviose, year II. of the Republic, 11th February 1794.

left the Hôtel de Ville, lingering there in an affliction which I cannot describe. I ran through the court-yards, the halls, seeking, seeking, and never finding her whom I sought; if the sentries had not driven me away, I would have broken into the hall of the Tribunal itself. At last I remained fixed before the fatal door by which she must come out; I would at least see her once more, and then I too could die. . . . I *must* see her once more. . . . Here my memory fails me. People asked me why I was crying, and I only then perceived my tears; I listened to the striking of the hours, they went so fast! A quarter to twelve—I would see her soon—Twelve o'clock! They tried to persuade me to go away; they took me away. Why did I let them do so? Why did my courage fail me at the last? Did she think that I had deserted her?—Ah, if there be *any* thing that can console me for not having seen her again, it is this, that my presence and my sorrow would have only added to her terrible suffering.

I lay motionless, stupefied by my misery, till about three o'clock some one knocked at the door: a woman, completely unknown to me, handed in a letter and went away. This letter was from my aunt who was already dead. Here it is:[1]—

"I embrace you, my good and dear child. My letter of yesterday did not reach you; be careful of your health and that of your two friends. Thank you for the coffee which I have just taken. I advise you to go and see your sister. . . . Ask for nothing and send me little; leave all to Cantat and Marigny. I embrace you with all my heart, having no hope of doing it again. I have asked to be re-examined. Take care of your health, and remember your aunt who loves you and who looks forward to meeting you

[1] I regret to have laid open this letter, so dear and so sacred to me, for indifferent eyes to read; these simple words can have no such value for others as they have for me. I wished to re-write these pages, but I have not the courage.

again, and who prays for your happiness. Do not ask for leave to see me. Give my greetings to our neighbours, and try to interest them in your fate. Adieu, my dear little one.

"I send you a box[1] (you can send it back with my dinner to-morrow), as well as my housewife and some other worthless trifles. I have a boxful for to-day, and need nothing. I wish I could repay what I owe you. I am well."

This note, addressed to Cantat, was written on a scrap of paper which seemed to have been torn out of some old book, and bore no date. One must have lived in those fearful times to understand with what tender prudence it was worded, to realise how carefully these phrases, in appearance so simple, had been framed and selected, to appreciate the calmness of spirit and the strength of resignation that forbade all complaint and permitted no single useless word. . . . God alone can give to the soul He has made a strength which so uplifts it.

What did I feel in reading this simple note? The hand that had written it was still for ever; only a few hours before, full of life and health, she had been thinking of me and trying to console me. "*I am well,*" she had written; "*I love you, and wish I could repay what I owe you.*" What did she owe me for caring for one I loved so dearly? She was in the place of my mother; she had been arrested for my father, for him she died. What did she owe *me?*

How carefully she advises me in this letter, where her tenderness is held in check, lest it should contain anything which might prevent it reaching me like the other of the day before. "*Take care of your health,*" she says twice. She speaks of my two friends; these are Cantat and St. Jean. She felt that they had suffered in her service and was grateful; she wished,

[1] A snuff-box; I did not receive it, nor anything else than the housewife and knife. I suspect that the man who brought me these kept the other things for himself.

by these words, to encourage them to be faithful to me. "*Ask for nothing.*" She was afraid that I should expose myself to danger by reclaiming our sequestrated effects. When she said "*Leave all to Cantat and Saint-Jean,*" she meant that they should make these reclamations in my place; she forbade me to try and see her, in the same anxiety for my safety. . . . "*Do not ask to see me*" told me that this was an eternal adieu: "*send me little,*" conveyed the message that she would not live long, and what I sent her she might not receive; I had better keep the little I had for myself. In writing "*I advise you to go and see your sister,*" she not only meant to remind me of this asylum, but thought, no doubt, that my presence would prevent the sale of Écherolles, and thus would preserve it for my father; she imagined also that my youth would except me from the hatred borne to my family. "*Who has no hope of embracing you again*"; yet at the same time she tries to rouse my courage by giving me still a little hope, "*I have asked to be re-examined.*" And the box that she speaks of being sent to her; she wished to make me believe there would be a to-morrow. But for her there was none!

Then she recommends me to my neighbours—all her solicitude is still for me! For me! . . . How she must have suffered in leaving me so alone and helpless!

In the evening I became aware of some one weeping at my side; it was Madame de Bellecise. She wept for a long time without attempting to speak to me, and the gentleness of her compassion seemed to relieve my intolerable grief. What words could have been worth her tears! . . . It was my utter loneliness that so overwhelmed me; I did not know where my father was, nor if my two brothers were alive, and the tie which bound my life to these others, the support that upheld me, had been torn away. Yet I could shed no tears!

Madame de Bellecise understood. She lingered

beside me like some comforting angel, and when her tenderness had melted the chill that lay about my heart, and when, awaking from the stupor that had held me for hours, I could once more weep myself, I found in her such a sympathy that I no longer felt so terribly alone. It almost seemed to me that my aunt looked at me out of her eyes; and when she begged me to come with her, I rose and followed her without repugnance, feeling that at her side my tears were less bitter. Madame Milanès was there also; she seemed anxious about my fate and assured me that she would do what she could. "Do you think of trying to rejoin your father?" she asked. "I know a family that is going soon to Switzerland and would take you there. You might find him: at any rate you could wait there in safety till you knew where he was." I refused this proposal. Had I not just learnt my aunt's desire that I should go to my sister? "You see, Madame, it is impossible."

After the fact of having lost my aunt, my greatest sorrow was to know nothing of her last moments. Providence later allowed me to learn some details, and I can find no better place for them than this. I owe them to M. de Révéroni, who, by an extraordinary chance, was set free from the "bad cells" only an hour or two before the execution. He was with the ladies, and like them, had made his preparations for death; they were blessed with the company of a good priest who was to share their terrible fate.

They passed the night which preceded their execution in prayers, in confessing their sins, and in humbly asking of God grace to die with courage. Their resignation, their piety, were so great that M. de Révéroni, husband and father as he was, almost regretted being taken away from them; the hope of life seemed small and poor beside so noble a death. He also had prepared for the sacrifice, and had turned

his thoughts away from the earth: sorrowfully he bade farewell to those who were to precede him in the way of peace, and came back to take up once more the fatigues and trials of this world.

He has often said that this memory will never be effaced in his heart; that no words of his can convey the tranquillity of those solemn hours. How I wish I could have heard him tell these things himself! But I never succeeded in meeting him.

They preserved their calmness even to the scaffold. When for the last time the door of their cell was opened for them, they passed out with the most perfect tranquillity, listening in silence to the reading of their sentence, and descending the steps of the Hôtel de Ville, they walked firmly and serenely to their death. At the foot of the guillotine, the good priest gave them his benediction. . . . My aunt was the first to go up. . . . She was followed by Mademoiselle Olivier, who wished to speak to the people but was prevented. The others came in turn; the priest, having blessed them all, was the last to die. Oh faithful shepherd, who only entered into his rest when he had seen his flock pass before him, out of all danger. . . .

. . . . . .

May they have entered into glory, these gentle souls that suffered with so beautiful a patience! While the tears still rushed from my eyes, while my heart was torn by its sorrow, they were received among the angels and, yonder, already received their recompense. How beautiful is such a death!

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CHAPTER XIII

I remain all day alone—M. Aléxandre comes in the evening and wishes to take me away—Cantat's sorrow—My dislike to leaving—He takes me to Fontaine, whence he starts again at night—They come to arrest me—Old Forêt's answer—Madeleine's attachment—I spend three weeks with her parents—Madame Milanès and her kindness—Farewell to all my friends—I return to Écherolles.

THE next day I spent in a little closet opening from my room, entirely alone. Forêt, respecting my grief, did not venture to disturb me; I was left to absorb myself in my sad thoughts, to realise the terrible loss that I had suffered, the blank that my aunt's death had made in my life. With her I lost all cause for care, for hope, even for fear. How gladly would I have borne these anxieties again! She had been my first thought on waking, my last when I lay down at night. And now . . . what was left to me on earth? Without her my life was utterly empty; I looked forward to death as a means of rejoining her.

I had lost all count of the hours, no sound had roused me from my infinite sorrow; I was striving, though feebly, to overcome the despair that crushed me down, when the door opened and old Forêt came in followed by a man in the uniform of the Revolutionary Guard, at whom I stared in amaze. It was not till he had dismissed Forêt with an imperious gesture, and we were alone, that I recognised M. Aléxandre. "What! is it *you?*" I cried,—"Is there news of my father?"

"I do not know where he is at this moment," he answered; "we were all arrested near the frontier, our passports being considered suspicious. While

they went to seek the proper persons to investigate them, however, your father bought over the man who was left in charge of us by giving him his watch; he let us escape by a window, and we were lucky enough to get back to Fontaine after a very short absence. Mine, indeed, had not even been perceived, and I took up my work as before. Your father has just gone away again alone; Bourdin went in another direction, and Charmet has decided to stay at home. As to me, I was warned that I had been denounced, so I came in to town to get my own passport countersigned before my denunciation was generally known. . . . When I left the Chozières, I promised them to come and see whether you had any bread[1] left. If you need any, let them know, and they will send you some."

"I need none now," I answered, "for my aunt is dead. She was executed yesterday."

"And you," he returned hastily, "what are you going to do now? What is to become of you?"

"I am waiting here for what I know is going to happen. Domiciliary visits will be made to-night, and I shall be arrested."

"Arrested! You?"

"Yes, I have been warned; the prisons are getting empty, and they must be filled up again."

"And you are waiting . . . for that?"

"Yes."

"Waiting here for them to arrest you without trying to escape?"

"Yes; I have nothing else to hope for. I look forward to it, indeed, with all my heart."

"Listen," he broke in. "You must come with me at once; I will take you to *mère* Chozières."

"No, Monsieur, leave me; I will not try to avoid my fate. I wish to die, to follow my aunt; and life has nothing to offer me that I should care for it. I long for death."

[1] These worthy people had often sent me bread.

"And I forbid it," he said resolutely. "Providence has sent me here, and shown me my duty. I know your father, I am the last to have seen him; I speak in his voice and with his authority, to command you to avoid the death that just now you desire. Besides, you do not know that you would be fortunate enough to die; many worse things happen in prisons! And there would at best be no one to care for you as you cared for your aunt. Can you count on such service as has to be paid for, and that even she could not always obtain? You must live, for the sake of your father and your brothers whom you will some day see again; in their name I order you, I command you, to follow me."

In spite of his energy, I still resisted. "No, no! I do not wish to live, leave me here. I am—I may be—already alone in the world; I see but one path before me, and I will follow it."

"Good!" he replied. "Then I will stay here with you, and you will be responsible for my death also."

At these words I had to give way. "You have conquered," I told him; "let us go at once. I have no right to drag you into danger as well as myself." . . . I had scarcely said these words when my maid entered.

"I am going to take away your mistress," he said to her. "She will not pass the night here."

Cantat burst into tears.

"You are going to take her away?" she cried. "But then what will become of us? They will come to-night to arrest her, and if she is not here they will put us in prison instead. Oh, do leave her here!"

I cannot easily describe the expression that came over M. Aléxandre's face at these words; it was first of all astonishment, then a fury which he could scarcely control. "That is all you think of, miserable creature!" he cried. "She is the last of the family you have served, and to whom you owe so much, the only one left, and you would sacrifice her without hesitation, you, who ought to be ready to give your life for

hers. Ah no! it would be too fine a death. You are not worthy of it."

His voice was raised in his anger, and his energy petrified poor Cantat, who stood before him like a statue—motionless, speechless, scarcely daring even to breathe. At this moment Forêt entered; he had heard M. Aléxandre's voice, though not his words, and he had come to discover the cause of the altercation. M. Aléxandre, however, gave him no time to ask questions, but announced authoritatively that his orders were to take me away with him without delay. Old Forêt, far too full of respect for his uniform to dream of raising any objections, bowed obsequiously, and went himself to open the door. All that had happened made me realise that, if we were to be saved, there was no time to lose; and I hastened out in great emotion.

All this had passed rapidly, so rapidly that I am sure we misunderstood Cantat, and that she had not the time to explain herself. I feel that I owe it to her to say that this poor girl, though very bad-tempered, was not unamiable, and that I had no reason to think she was my enemy. I still think that she took M. Aléxandre for what he pretended to be, and that in trying to persuade him to leave me where I was, she only intended to hide me herself from the visits that were to be made that night. I confess that I never questioned her as to that moment of terror, when she forgot everything but her own peril.

I went away with a heavy heart, leaving behind me the only creature who had remained faithful to me, but which I dared not take with me; this was my little dog, whose affection had been my one comfort in those sad hours when I came home at night to my melancholy hearth. My father and my aunt had loved this little beast; round him many memories gathered; and I said to him as I came away, "Yes, *they* loved you too."

I followed my guide rapidly; his coat served as a

free pass, and we went out of the town-gate without the least difficulty, feeling ourselves free once we were outside in the country. It had been important to lose no time in starting; as it was, our promenade was a late one, and must have seemed strange. Presently it grew very dark: a fine, penetrating rain began to fall, and the difficulty of distinguishing anything made our journey seem very long and very fatiguing; indeed, it was only M. Aléxandre's acquaintance with the road that enabled him to find his way in the intense darkness that protected our flight. As to me, I gave myself up with perfect confidence to the care of this good man, walking, according to his desire, with the greatest precaution, and avoiding every noise. . . . In the silence of our long walk, I went over, in my heart, all the terrible events which had led me into being out, at night and alone, in the company of a young stranger.

We arrived very late at Fontaine, where the good people welcomed me heartily. M. Aléxandre told them of my misfortunes, and gave me over into their care. . . . The greater part of the night was spent in recounting all that had happened; M. Aléxandre's return rejoiced them, and a good fire and some supper refreshed us after our fatigue. After having talked for a long time of the sorrows of the past days and the terrors of the days to come, of the anxious future and the mournful past, I wished my guide good-night, and, taking his hand, I tried to express my gratitude, but could find no fit words. "Till to-morrow!" I said. . . . I never saw him again, for he went away before daybreak. I do not know whether he is still alive or where he lives: I have never even heard him named. . . . When I woke it was to sorrow and shame; I had seemed so ungrateful, I had thanked him so poorly, so insufficiently! He had saved the orphan, and protected me in my weakness and my loneliness at the peril of his own life. May Heaven have recompensed him, as I have prayed so often since.

They did actually come to arrest me during that

night, as I had been warned. Old Forêt, however, replied that I had already been removed about six o'clock in the evening, under the charge of a Revolutionary Guard; and to the question, "To what prison did they take her?" he answered that he did not know. On this they went away. Reassured in perceiving that they made no difficulty about my absence, Cantat kept my secret; it was true that the great number of arrests made on such a night made prompt verification difficult, almost impossible, and to gain time was a great thing. I do not know whether Cantat, if she had been imprisoned, could have been trusted for courage and discretion; I hope that, like so many others, she would have found strength in her very misfortunes. But it is certain that, in spite of M. Aléxandre's carefulness to say nothing before her, she knew, or could guess, that I was at Fontaine, and indeed Saint-Jean came to see me there but a short time afterwards.

I stayed three weeks with these kind people, whose goodness never changed or lessened. I cannot think without tenderness of the care with which they surrounded me; it was only at my repeated entreaties that I was allowed, for instance, to eat along with them, and of the same food. "You are not accustomed to our hours, to our dishes," said Madeleine. Ah, I was no longer accustomed to anything! Madeleine herself watched over me with a never-changing affection. Always warned in time when domiciliary visits were to be made, she would lead me by quiet paths over the dividing-line into the next department; here I would stay until the departure of the Commissaries, when she came again to fetch me back. I was no longer a secondary interest to her; I was now the one to be saved, the object of all her solicitude. As to me, the quietness and leisure in which I found myself plunged seemed almost unbearable; I had nothing to do, no one to care for, my days were empty and long. I had nothing to think of

but myself; I was like a branch broken from a tree, and thrown down to die and wither from want of support. In this state of mind there came on me a violent desire to seek for, and find, my father; a desire so strong and vehement that I almost forgot what my aunt had wished me to do. However, when Saint-Jean and Cantat heard of my intentions, they were so uneasy at the thought of going back alone to Moulins that they employed secret pressure to bring me back to my original plans. I do not know whether they were influenced by my aunt's desire, or whether it was that they feared to be punished themselves if they did not take me with them. However that may be, Providence made use of these two weak creatures to show me my road, and I made arrangements for starting. I confess it was not without terror that I looked forward to returning to a district where the hatred borne to my father seemed to forewarn me of hard treatment for myself, and where the uncertainty of my reception weighed upon my spirits.

I led at Fontaine a life that was very tranquil, and would have been pleasant but for the grief and the bitter regret which filled my heart. Every evening, at the *veillée*, I read the *Vie des Saints* aloud. Towards midnight *mère* Chozières started the prayer, and then the little company separated. I found much consolation in such a life. . . . Every Sunday I read the prayers of the Mass to the assembled family; on our knees we fervently begged for repentance for the guilty and consolation for the unhappy. Even Pierre, the idiot (of whom I have already spoken) joined us with all that he had of understanding; he prayed at least with his heart, if not with his mind. His humility was sincere, and he had enough intelligence to keep faithfully the important secrets that we were often obliged to confide to him.

In obeying my aunt's instructions, I had to separate myself from all this; I was to enter upon a most unhappy life, living absolutely alone, deciding my own

actions, answerable for every word I let drop, possessed of a most dangerous liberty, without a friend, without a counsellor. How great is the wisdom that hides the future from us! Who could bear the burden of it if we knew what to expect? If I could have foreseen then all the sorrows that the years were to accumulate about me, I am sure that I would have returned to Lyons and begged as a favour to die upon the scaffold. . . . I can say but little as to my character in those days; I was led along by events and acted more by their impulsion than by any force of my own. Forced at the same time to be timid and unshrinking, confiding and reserved, my loneliness made me hide closely in my heart all my emotions and my desires; to speak of them to those who could neither understand nor sympathise would have seemed to me a profanation. I expressed no opinions, for similar reasons; silence is a great safeguard. I have heard myself praised for courage and have wondered; what have I done that I could have done otherwise? I was carried along by circumstances, and I could but walk in the path they opened before me.

I was easily duped by an air of sincerity, for in spite of so many misfortunes, I found it hard to believe in evil, or rather I felt the imperious need for believing in what was good. Disillusioned as to Cantat and Saint-Jean, I lost all affection for them, though the habit of childhood still led me to feel a certain respect for their advice; but the necessity of pretending a confidence in them that I no longer felt, was a constant misery. This contradiction between my feelings and my position seemed to me to be the one thing most difficult to bear; for as to the rest, an indifference that I dare not call resignation had crept over me, and I felt no longer the least anxiety about my own fate.

Nothing could have been better for me, at such a time, than my stay at Fontaine. In spite of the emptiness of my days, my loneliness, and the uncer-

tainty which veiled the future, I found much comfort in the society of Madeleine, in whose heart I came to fill Mademoiselle de Sauriac's place. She never left me alone; she sought in every way she could to rouse and to console me, and every day I loved her more. *Mère* Chozières, too, studied my least tastes and fancies, and delighted in preparing little dishes for me, in spite of my remonstrances; "You are not fit to live as we do," she said, and continued to take her own way. Even her husband was as kind to me as was possible to his character, and showed that he was touched by my misfortunes. I was the only stranger then in his house, and my youth convinced him that I could not be dangerous for his own security; thus he was well disposed towards me.

Saint-Jean, who had had no difficulty in discovering my retreat, came one day to see me and brought me Coquette, my dear little dog. It was the first joy I had had for a long time, and I was sincerely touched that he should have thought of it; while my little pet's delight was even greater than mine. She loved me, and was faithful to me, and this little animal was all that I had left! Only those who, like me, had lost all, can realise what I felt and how I valued this affection, which seemed my only tie to all that was gone for ever. My father and my aunt had petted the little creature, and loved it; for me, the touch of their dear hands was still on the soft fur, and Coquette brought back to me not only their memory but almost their very presence. I wept when I held the little dog once more in my arms, and I felt less lonely.

Saint-Jean informed me that at his demand and Cantat's, the seals had been removed from our rooms, in order that they might take away their effects as had been arranged. Further he told me that they intended to return to Moulins with a man who had brought a load of sabots to Lyons, and had room to take them in his empty cart. "And I came here," he added, "to ask you what you intended to do?"

Kindness of Madame Milanès

"I will go with you," I answered; "I have neither the power nor the will to do otherwise." In fact, since I had returned to my firm intention of obeying my aunt, all my alarm had left me. I charged him to tell Madame Milanès of my approaching departure, and to ask her advice as to the means by which I could obtain a passport.

Shortly afterwards he came back to take me to her, without letting Forêt know of my presence in Lyons. I shall never forget the kindness, the tenderness, of Madame Milanès, nor the affection she showed me, and her words, manner, and sympathy made a deep impression on my heart. In her house I returned for a while to the habits of life that had once been familiar to me, and I wept when I realised all that I had lost, and that I should never find again.

In order to obtain a passport, it was necessary to obtain a certificate from the section in which one lived. I could not ask for this without running considerable danger; it was decided that I should hand over in its place an assignat for a hundred francs, the person whose duty it was to give out the passports having no objection to the change! This negotiation was confided to Madame Milanès' maid, who was one of the most intelligent persons I ever came across. Having warned the official in question, she went with me to the bureau; I handed in a paper which he appeared to read with attention, and after having carefully locked it up in a drawer, he gave me my passport, describing me therein as a sewing-woman—a name applicable to any female—it being necessary to give particulars of one's condition or profession.

I had supper with Madame Milanès, and slept in her room. When I was undressing, she noticed a red ribbon sewn to my stays. "Alexandrine," she cried, "what is that?"

"It is the Cross of Saint-Louis belonging to my father."

"Are you mad, my dear child? Do you mean to say you have always worn it like that?"

"Yes, it is all I have been able to keep, and I hope to preserve it for him."

"And when you were going in and out of prison——?"

"I always wore it. He bought it at the cost of his own blood."

"Alexandrine, I beg of you to give it up! If ever you are searched it will probably cost you your life, and you have no right to risk it without more reason."

I found it very hard to follow her advice, but I recognised her prudence, and could refuse nothing to her kindness and my gratitude. I gave my treasure into her keeping. More than this, I had also hidden in my stays some papers which had been entrusted to me by my father and my aunt;[1] and these also I had to sacrifice to my wise protectress, though with great reluctance and regret.

Next day I went to the Temporary Commission to have my passport countersigned. It was a former Prefect of the College of Moulins who received me, and he looked at me for a long time. "Since when have you been a sewing-woman?" he asked.

"Since I could sew as well as my mother," I replied, and he said nothing more.

When I bade her farewell, Madame Milanès put into my hands a packet of assignats slightly burnt. "These," she said, "were snatched from the brazier into which one of your unhappy fellow-citizens before he was executed threw all that he possessed. Some were saved. I think you have a right to these, coming as you do from the same city." This delicacy in offering me help went straight to my heart, and afterwards, on thinking it over, I became convinced that she had only benefited by the above story as an excuse to assist me. Otherwise how could she have

[1] They both forgot that they had given me these papers, for which I could find no safer hiding-place than inside my stays, and there I kept them. I had thus been in possession (among other things) of several blank signatures of M. de Précy, given to my father for some purpose that I do not know; but realising their dangerous nature, I had destroyed them.

obtained these assignats? . . . I called down every blessing upon her, and then, in company of Saint-Jean, took my way sadly to Fontaine, where I was to pass the time until my departure.

Madeleine was inconsolable at my going away. She did not like either Saint-Jean or Cantat, and confided to me their intrigues to prevent me from remaining where I was; moreover she told me that the stories they had told me to dissuade me from going to Switzerland were much exaggerated and partly of their own invention. "And you are going to trust yourself with such people!" she said. "As long as I thought it was for your good I said nothing, but they think of no one but themselves. Stay with us, who love you, and we will take care of you."

"Madeleine, I must obey my aunt."

"Oh, your aunt thought you would be safe in your own home, and meant to act for the best, but these people only wish to take you there that they may not be held responsible." Tears were my only answer, for her affection touched me deeply but did not shake my resolution. "At least," she repeated, "if you are unhappy write to me: I will find out how to reach you, to help you, and bring you back. As long as I am alive you will be safe here, and can wait for your father's return, for he will return, I am sure."

My good Madeleine! She would have done what she promised in all truth; she always carried out whatever she undertook. I could only weep with her over a separation which parted me from so sincere and tender a friend. . . . I passed a few days more at Fontaine, days that were calm and restful, such as follow a tempest and give one the strength to face and support new storms. I loved every one and everything in this humble dwelling; little Driette, with the discretion of a woman, had all the bright gaiety of her real age, and sad as I was she often made me laugh; Pierre understood at least that I was unhappy, and tried to amuse me. No doubt his powers were limited, but

having observed one day that I had laughed on seeing him jump about with Coquette, henceforward whenever he saw me looking (as he thought) too melancholy, he began a sort of dance so grotesque and absurd that it was impossible to remain serious. As soon as I commenced to laugh he was so delighted that he redoubled his efforts, and indeed only stopped his antics when tired out. I was grateful to him for his intention, and I was interested in this poor fellow, who had sufficient brains and wit never to commit an indiscretion, and whose prudence was greater than that of many wiser people.

When Cantat and Saint-Jean had at last made ready for departure, they came to fetch me, and I said farewell to the worthy Chozières. They were sad farewells, indeed. . . . I was taking an important step that was to influence all the rest of my life.

I went back to our rooms in town and passed a melancholy night there. Old Forêt, seeing that I was furnished with a proper passport, put no difficulties into the way of my departure, which indeed suited his interests, for he was not sorry to get rid of the only person who had the right to reclaim the things put under his guard, which he had come to look upon as his own. I have been told that, with the help and doubtless the encouragement of his wife, he stole nearly all that had been placed under seals; and I believe that he and his wife were both executed in a reaction which took place later.

I went to say good-bye to Madame de Souligné, whose daughter, being about my own age, had been my friend. Their guardian allowed me to see them as I was going away. M. de Souligné had been executed; they hoped soon to obtain leave to quit Lyons, and to retire to a small property that Madame de Souligné possessed near Sens, of which they gave me the address. Such good-byes were heartrending, for it was impossible to tell whether we would ever meet again. I felt as if I were walking towards a precipice.

I Return to Écherolles

. . . After this I went to see Madame de Bellecise, whom I revered as a saint, and loved almost as a mother. She wept over me and blessed me. I asked her whether she knew anything of her daughter. "Félicité is in safety," she said. I was thankful indeed, for I very deeply admired Félicité de Bellecise; she was my ideal, and I could imagine no one to surpass her. Old M. de Bellecise also bade me farewell kindly, and I left them, grateful with all my heart for their evident pity and sympathy.

Next day, early in the morning, I climbed into the sabot-maker's cart, and left the city where I had lost all that I loved. There went with me a little boy of four or five years old, whose father had been guillotined, and whose mother, fallen into dire poverty, was sending him to the care of an uncle, a bookseller at Moulins. The sight of this child, who was younger and even more unhappy than I, led me to console myself with the thought of all that remained to me: I was going to rejoin my sister, to see my old nurse, to live in the house where I was born; perhaps I should still find some friends there.

Nevertheless the journey was a sad one; my companions' manners towards me, and their rudeness, had never struck me so distinctly before, but they now laid by all restraint. I saw some of my aunt's dresses in Cantat's bag. "She left them to me," she said; she had taken my aunt's last letter literally, while it had been written in a very different sense. I kept silence, for I was beginning to understand that complaint was vain.

CHAPTER XIV

Écherolles—My sister and her nurse — I am questioned—The Revolutionary Committee of Moulins proposes to send me to the Depôt—Dr. Simard interferes—I am allowed to remain in arrest at Écherolles — Mme. de Grimauld—My life at Écherolles — The Tree of Liberty—I cut my hair—Mdlle. Melon, my aunt—She obtains leave to have me with her.

I ARRIVED at Écherolles on a fine morning in May (1794), but how sad and how empty it looked to my eyes! Though I was not expected, my nurse welcomed me with sincere delight, looking upon me as a lost child whose return she had ceased to hope for. Next day my companions, Saint-Jean and Cantat, went on to Moulins, and I breathed more easily; the way they had behaved towards me made me suspicious of them, and I was glad to be quit of their society. From the time when I was obliged to live with people whom I could not trust, I had learnt to enclose all my thoughts and emotions in my own heart; it had become a habit, very useful and very wise in such days as those, but which at er deprived me of many friendships or intimacies, by which I should otherwise have benefited.

When I arrived at Écherolles I was doubtful of others, but still more uncertain of myself. It seemed to me that I was better educated and better brought up than those about me, and I feared lest such a difference should be counted to me as a crime; an uneasiness that I had never known before became my daily lorment, and the memory of past days spent in this my home with all my family made the present seem very bitter. I was alone, helpless, and poor: surely I was to be pitied!

My Sister and her Nurse

I loved my old nurse, but my trust in her had been shaken by the opinions she had professed in the early days of the Revolution. The hatred which she felt for all abuses led her to look on the changes that then took place as being for the good of her country; she had approved of them with an ardour that I had never forgotten, and which—for me—overshadowed the affection she bore me. I was young and intolerant, easily carried away by my opinions; I looked on her as guilty because she had been wrong in one instance, and her counsel lost all value to me. Nevertheless I soon discovered that her love for me had never changed, and I learnt to acknowledge that there were few nobler souls than hers, few warmer hearts, and to feel that I owed her deep gratitude. Devoted to my sister, necessary to her existence, she gave up her life to caring for her most tenderly, and having long been convinced of her error, which had only grown from a strong love of justice, she now sincerely hated the Revolutionaries and their excesses. I am glad to do her justice here, and to declare all that I owe her, to make up as far as may be for the opinion I once had of her.

The Château courtyard was an absolute solitude when my miserable cart went slowly up to the great steps at the entrance. I got down—how *soundless* everything was! I had left this same place some eighteen months before, in a comfortable carriage, seated at my aunt's side and surrounded with care and attention, and now I did not know whether a family was left to me, whether my father and my brothers still existed. Should I ever see them again? But for the fear of betraying my emotions and the dread lest I should give way myself, I could scarcely have controlled my feelings; as it was, I did not shed one tear on entering the deserted and desolate house of my father.

I found that my nurse's time was completely filled up with taking care of my sister, and she had no

"Did not you hear what he said?"

"I shall not do any work."

"Alexandrine, you are calling down unhappiness upon yourself!"

"I will resign myself to whatever happens; but nothing in the world will make me obey that man."

"But you will make some *charpie?*"

"No, I will not." My poor nurse, afflicted with my obstinacy, set about making some herself; indeed, I saw her at work upon shirts and vests also, and I do not doubt that she gave me the credit of them, but she said no more to me on the subject.

The mayor of the commune came in his turn to examine such effects as I had brought back. Everything was unfolded, shaken, and looked over with minute care to find out whether no rebel proclamations were hidden therein; a *procès-verbal* was drawn up and sent to the committee. My nurse, with a prudence that I understood though I did not approve of it, had hidden the greater part of the little that I possessed, so that I had but one dress to put on, and that a well worn one. I did not like this. She repeated continually, "You must look as if you were poor," to which I as constantly replied, "I do not want to inspire pity." Her affectionate anxiety made her afraid of everything which might compromise me; whereas I dreaded nothing so much as compassion, and my pride led me to violently repulse the least symptom of protection or sympathy, which I found much harder to bear than my misfortunes. And yet, if I had only known it, I deserved the deepest pity for the horror of the fate that was then proposed for me! I only learnt later the facts that follow.

After my examination, the committee deliberated as to what was to be done with me. I was looked upon as a dangerous person, bearing a hated name, coming from an accursed city, entrusted, perhaps, with secrets which it was important I should not communicate to my party. For this reason they did not wish to send

me to prison along with others of my own class; and moreover it would have been a kindness to put me where I might find relatives or friends, when their only desire was to punish in me the crimes (!) of my family. The result of this deliberation was a decree ordering me to be removed to, and retained at, the Depôt. At this name the blood in my veins still runs cold, in spite of the years that have passed since then.

The Depôt was the prison where the vilest prostitutes were kept in confinement, those who to the most foul life had added crimes for which they would have paid with their lives but for the want of some small detail of proof. It was in the midst of this hotbed of vice that I was condemned to live!

Providence saved me from this degradation. The decree was not at once put into force, and this delay saved me in giving time for remorse to awaken in the heart of the man who had been present at my birth. This was Simard, our family doctor, who, since the Revolution had broken out, had declared himself my father's enemy, and now sat as member of the Revolutionary Committee in the very house[1] where for years he had been received as a friend, and helped to condemn to infamy the child whom he had caressed and cared for, and more than once brought back to health and life. He spoke for me; he pointed out that I could scarcely be dangerous at my age, and that as the estate of Écherolles had not yet been sold, I might remain there under the surveillance of the local municipality, and of the farmer, Alix, who would answer for my safety; that further, it would always be possible to put the decree into force later on if the committee desired to do so. His proposals were accepted. May the protection he gave the orphan be repaid to him in the end by the Eternal Justice!

I remained in ignorance of this terrible misfortune that was still hanging over my head, and I am grateful

[1] The Revolutionary Committee had seized upon my father's house at Moulins for its headquarters.

for the delicacy that kept it from my knowledge. I was too young to have appreciated all its horrors, but I would have understood enough to have fallen into utter despair at the idea of being removed to such a place.

As it was, my captivity distressed me little. I was under surveillance certainly, but as it did not interfere with me directly, it caused me no trouble. Moreover, I could hope for nothing better, and having returned in obedience to my aunt's last desire, an order sacred in my eyes, it never occurred to me to try to make my escape. What could I have done with liberty, indeed? Whither could I have gone? As I could not rejoin my father, I had no reason to leave Écherolles. The friends of my family were either imprisoned or in exile; my father's name could not be uttered aloud without compromising whoever made use of it. There was no one who had either the power or the desire to protect me. There was no one who was free to act according to his own sentiments. Madame de Grimauld, a good friend of my mother's, having heard of the destitution in which I had returned from Lyons, sent me word that I should share the wardrobe of her daughter Josephine, my first and dearest friend. I refused, but I was deeply touched by this, the only mark of remembrance and sympathy.

I have since learnt that had the decree of the Revolutionary Committee been put into force, Mdlle. de Grimauld had arranged to leave her daughter in safe hands, and to accompany me to the Depôt; or rather, being already under arrest in her own house, she would have demanded to be transferred to that prison, in order to protect me by her presence. "It seemed to me," she said simply, "my duty to your mother." These few words are enough; one needs to say no more of these two good women, united in an affection that death had not lessened, and that came to me as a heritage of which I could not be despoiled. . . . Madame de Grimauld had supported with a most

noble dignity and patience the sorrow that her husband's misconduct and bad character had brought into her life. She had never even uttered a complaint, nor permitted an expression of pity for her sufferings. She was so generally esteemed, that the Jacobins themselves felt an involuntary respect for her, and I am sure that she could have obtained without difficulty permission to share my hideous imprisonment.

My life at Écherolles was quiet and peaceable, and gradually I became used to the absence of the excitement and constant alarms to which our stormy existence at Lyons had accustomed me. I did not know what was going on in the world, and this very ignorance was a sort of repose. My days slipped away one after the other in a monotony that was sad but calm and never unpleasant. If I could not enter the apartments of the Château, I could wander where I chose in its large and beautiful gardens,[1] so full, for me, of memories of my childhood. I found in every corner old friends that were dear to my heart; every bush or flower recalled my father. I felt as if he were with me still.

He had often, from a raised terrace, pointed out to me the villages and farms scattered amongst the vineyards of the sunlit slopes that faced us. At our feet were wide green fields, and beyond them the capricious waters of the Allier, the beautiful river that loses its name when it joins the Loire; yonder, a pretty country house belonged to one of our relatives; here to the left, who could mistake the mountain with its rounded head crowned with clouds? It is the Puy-de-Dôme. . . . In this corner was my mother's especial garden, where I have seen her, as I played, watering her flowers; here are the trees that she planted herself. There was one for each of us; but hers died in the very year that she herself left us. Ours were still there, strangely like ourselves and our fortunes, vegetating miserably

[1] The woods have all been cut down, and the plough has passed over the lawns. These lovely gardens no longer exist.

as if without force either to grow or to die. . . . Not a corner without its memories, not a spot that did not speak to me of the happy past, of my joys and my pleasures, of all that I loved! And how far away it all was! The Revolution had made me a centenarian at fourteen years old.

In very truth a hundred years could scarcely have brought to Écherolles greater changes than had taken place in the last eighteen months. The farmers who lived in the buildings dependent on the Château, had accumulated for themselves those rapid fortunes peculiar to the time, composed mainly of assignats; they kept open house, and the number of guests who daily shared their table, proved that they lived in plenty. The shouts, the drinking-songs, the wild gaiety that lasted long into every night, and that reached even to our ears, told us the society they kept, and the means by which they dissipated their ill-won wealth. And perhaps at no other time was wealth ever so desired, so sought after, though it was so easy to grow rich that every one had only to seize what came in his way. Each was bent on raising himself to that rank, to that luxury, from which the ancient holders had been torn down; valuable furniture, rare possessions, were to be had for a song, assignats were plentiful, and every day brought new desires and new occasions. These fortunes, however, so rapidly gathered, rarely lasted long; it was a case of "quick come, quicker go."

One of my trials, while staying at Écherolles, was a want of any occupation. I had absolutely nothing to do; no books, for I was only very rarely allowed to take one from my father's bookcase. My days were terribly empty; but at last I filled them by working for the peasants. One of them brought me a muslin handkerchief, begging me to embroider it for her, and this suggested to me how to make use of my time. In exchange for my work, she gave me butter and eggs; I profited by this lesson. My nurse also took to making babies' caps, and thus between us we provided

our table with cheese and other dainties, and even with occasional chickens. Once a week only we bought fresh meat with some of the few assignats that I had brought back with me; the farmer gave us the flour with which Babet made our bread, and Vernière, our faithful gardener, kept us provided with vegetables. I took my frugal meals at the same kitchen-table where formerly my father's servants had been served, and, indeed, I would not have changed it for such another as those whence we heard the drunken clamour. I had good bread, was that not enough for one who had known the want of it?[1] I was no longer afraid of starvation and famine, those terrible words that, even whispered, are enough to raise the people into revolt, and to spread abroad disorder and death. Famine, the fear of which had maddened the people of the Free Commune (we no longer dared to call it Lyons), this ghastly spectre of famine appeared in every place where it was desired to excite the mobs; in Paris itself, these fictitious terrors were repeatedly encouraged among the lowest of its populace, in order to work them into an irresistible fury against those it was convenient to destroy. There was an abundance of everything that the people had no need of; but the bread they worked for with the sweat of their brow, the bread which was their chief food, this was held back from them whenever they were to be excited into fury.

I spent several months in great tranquillity, and nothing would have disturbed the uniformity of my days, if it had not been quite suddenly proposed to plant a Tree of Liberty in front of the Château. The farmer Alix declared he could not prevent its being done, and thenceforward we heard nothing on every hand but news of the preparations for this ceremony,

[1] When invited by a friend to dinner, every guest was told to bring his own bread. Sometimes, when many were present, and the bread was produced from every pocket in turn, all varieties and shapes were represented on the table.

which was to attract a great number of people to the place. I was even shown the cap destined to crown the tree, the principal ornament of the festival. My nurse was very much alarmed at the project, which she thought had been given up, and fearing lest I should be forced into appearing at the ceremony, carefully sounded me as to my intentions.

"Do you know that they are going to plant a Tree of Liberty?" she said to me.

"Yes; but it has nothing to do with me."

"But——"

"Well, but what?"

"Shall you go to the ceremony?"

"I go! What should I do there?"

"But you see," she repeated, "it is at the very door of the Château, and they may insist on it perhaps."

"I shall not go, however."

"They will want you to be present, to dance round the tree, in fact to do as they do."

"I shall not go; they may drag me there by force, but of my own will I will not go there. I will neither dance, nor sing, nor kiss the tree, under any circumstances."

"For my sake, Alexandrine; if you make them angry with you, it may cost you your life!"

"I would rather lose it than stoop to such infamy; and I am not afraid of death."

My poor nurse, out of her affection for me, tried hard to persuade me to follow her advice, but I would not listen to her.[1] She then went to Alix, to tell him of my obstinacy, which might prove so great a danger; having lost all hope of making me change my mind, she implored him to do what he could to put off the ceremony, and he undertook to do so. In the meantime, I was so convinced that it would take place that

[1] Some young girls, thinking thus to save their own or their parents' lives, were weak enough to let themselves be enticed into joining these Bacchanalian revels; they found there their own ruin, but not the mercy that they had tried to buy so dearly.

when my nurse left me, I cut off all my long hair so as to save trouble for the executioner.

To gain time was a great thing. Robespierre's death came at last to change the fate of France; the executions diminished in number, and hope began to reappear in our unfortunate country. So many terrors had worn out the populace; satiated, it now longed for repose. I myself heard with joy of the event that was to restore us to peace; a faint breath, as it were, of relief, of happiness, of security, followed this great news, of which I did not yet understand all the results. I saw no one who could give me any information, and my life experienced no visible change, for fear was still too universal for many to realise at once the fall of the Reign of Terror. Egoism, self-interest, uncertainty as to what would come next, affected people differently. Some regretted the loss of their share of power, others dared not believe that the hydra was really conquered. The inhabitants of Echerolles shared in the general agitation, and tried to shape events, if I may so express myself, according to their own desires or needs, hoping to turn the future opening before them to their own profit. I felt humiliated and wounded by all who came near me. The avidity of the lower classes was but the more visible now that the terror which had lain so heavily upon us had been lightened.

I remember one day, when I was sitting in the garden with my sister and our nurse, some of my father's tenants[1] were lying upon the grass not far from the bench where we were sitting. They went on with their conversation, which turned upon the division of the lands of those who had emigrated, a hope that had been held out to them in the earliest days of the emigration, and of which they were not yet disabused. These men were attached to me; they pitied me sincerely, and yet each of them declared in

[1] *Métayers*, peasant-farmers, working small holdings, generally dependent on the château, and owing service thereto.—*Translator's note.*

the hearing of their master's daughter, "I ask for nothing more than the land I work. I shall be quite content with that!" My foster-father was among them.

The reaction which crushed Robespierre brought into force a milder rule, to the great displeasure of a certain high personage who had hoped much from Robespierre's services. The prison gates opened; many who were confined were set at liberty; at last it was possible to breathe, to live. My own fate was affected by this great change, and in a manner that was quite unexpected.

My father had a cousin-german of over eighty, who lived in the depths of the country, and who, by this retirement, and the prudence of M. Bonvent, her man of business, had escaped from the dangers of the period. She had been preserved principally by the care he took to screen her from general observation; in short, whatever means he had employed, he had used them with success. Mademoiselle Melon was essentially a member of the *ancien régime* by her rank, her fortune, and her habits, and, I might add, her age. She scarcely knew anything of the times in which she lived, and almost every word of hers, had it been overheard, would have been sufficient to have led to her death.

She was living on one of her estates, where she desired to build a Château, when the Revolution broke out. M. Bonvent, knowing the vehement character of Mademoiselle Melon, at once understood the danger that threatened her, and did his best to keep her in this quiet retreat. She consented to stay till things were once more settled, and a small lodging was hastily prepared for her in one of the wings which were all that had as yet been built. A stable was divided into four small rooms, sufficient, if not convenient, for herself and two of her women, while the rest of her attendants were dispersed in the vast dependencies of the future Château.

Mademoiselle Melon

While Mademoiselle Melon was making these arrangements, the Revolutionary Committee of the Department of Nièvre had established itself in her house at Nevers, which obliged her henceforward to remain on her estate of Ombre. She often talked of going some day to kick out the rascals that had seized her property, but as these remarks were safely made at the corner of her own hearth, the "rascals" paid no attention to them. Besides, M. Bonvent, who enjoyed a considerable share of his mistress's fortune, had no desire to be deprived of it, and took good care to prevent Dame Nation from casting her avid eyes on all this wealth. Mademoiselle Melon had thus lived in security, while all around were suffering and death; she saw no visitors, read no papers, and knew nothing of what was going on.

Now it happened one day that, when she was at dinner with M. Bonvent, a peasant asked to see her without delay. Mademoiselle Melon sent word that she would receive him; but once in her presence, the man, whether through embarrassment or stupidity, could not very clearly explain the object of his visit. After being repeatedly told to speak out, he at last took courage.

"Now that we are all equal," he said, "I have come to 'requisition'[1] you."

"What do you mean?" returned Mademoiselle Melon, who did not understand.

"I say, that now we are all free to exercise our rights, I put you in requisition."

"And what does *that* mean?" she asked, somewhat impatiently.

"Why, it means that you must marry me!"

To hear this, to rise from her chair, to seize her cane and let fall a rain of blows upon this astonishing (and astonished) suitor, was the work of an instant. He stepped back, but she followed him, crying:

[1] In several departments the Jacobins forced rich heiresses into such marriages.

"Ah, you wish to marry me? Ah, ah! here is a wedding for you — here, like this, and this, and this . . . !"

The man still withdrew backwards, utterly stupefied by his reception.

"*Dame Citoyenne!* I thought——"

"Ah, I am a *Citoyenne* now, am I? Wait a little, wait a little. *That's* for the *Citoyenne.*" . . . Here he fairly took to his heels, "shamed as a fox trapped by the simple hen." Mademoiselle Melon took a long while to calm herself, and M. Bonvent, it is said, laughed in his sleeve.

I do not know how she was informed of my position and the misfortunes of my family. She had in her youth spent several years under the protection of my grandmother, and she now felt it her duty to show her gratitude by extending the same to me. Touched with a sincere compassion for my loneliness and misery, she resolved to come to my help; and showed me an interest and a sympathy that were rare as they were precious in those days, when, though things were quieter, the same men were still in power and danger ever present.

Mademoiselle Melon, then, with a view to assisting me, sent M. Bonvent to the Representative Noël, who was making his rounds in the department of Nièvre, to ask whether, considering her age, her loneliness, and her bad health, she might not reclaim the presence and care of her grand-niece[1] who lived at a distance, alone, and under arrest. Citizen Noël, when the matter had been explained to him, replied that my youth made such a demand possible, but that it must be addressed to the Revolutionary Committee at Moulins. On hearing this, she immediately despatched her man of business to attend to the affair; but the committee, having deliberated in the matter, pro-

[1] It is customary in France to call a relative of this degree—a first cousin once removed—aunt (or uncle) *à la mode de Bretagne.—Translator's note.*

posed to send my sister in my place. M. Bonvent pointed out that the *Citoyenne* Melon, who was over eighty years old, required great attention herself, and could not be burdened with the care of another who would require even more, and be of no use; he therefore refused the exchange. Three days passed in discussing the question; it was during this time that I first saw M. Bonvent at Écherolles. I shall never forget my astonishment at finding any one ready to interest themselves in my fate, and I listened, almost without understanding, to the account of the demand made by my grand-aunt for the companionship of her niece. I had really an aunt[1] still, and one that thought of me! The hope of leaving Écherolles roused all my activity; a new future opened before me, and I was ready to declare myself happy. I felt that I should be leaving a place sullied by many vices, where I lived too much to myself, and I imagined that elsewhere all would be well. . . . M. Bonvent, after having told me of my aunt's generous intentions, returned to Moulins, and I waited anxiously for news. On the fourth day I received permission, or rather I was ordered to start; the committee having consented to my transfer to the commune of Thaix, where I was to be kept under surveillance by the local municipality, M. Bonvent undertaking to return me to the Moulins committee, should they at any time desire it. Under these conditions, I was allowed to go with him.

I was in no way necessary to my sister, who did not know me from any one else, and who was amply cared for by her nurse. Nevertheless I left her with regret, in spite of the brilliant but vague hopes that were awakening in my heart; indeed, I did not know what I hoped for, but my imagination so long fettered or crushed, built up intangible and beautiful illusions, and the mere fact of being once more able to hope for *anything* was life and joy.

[1] See preceding note, p. 208.

One of the farmer's daughters accompanied me to Moulins, where Alix and M. Bonvent awaited me, the one to hand over, the other to accept my charge. Next day I was allowed to go and see two friends of my family, Mesdames Fabrice and Grimauld, who both received me with great kindness; but as I was accompanied by the girl above mentioned, they spoke to me with some reserve. My folly in allowing her to go in with me deprived me of the pleasure of talking openly with these dear friends, and I had but an instant to spare for Josephine Grimauld, my old playmate and companion.

CHAPTER XV

I set out with M. Bonvent—Looking forward to a happy future—First interview with Mdlle. Melon—Her kindness—Life at Ombre—Its monotony—I receive a sum of money—Whence it came.

M. BONVENT, having obtained permission to take me away, felt that he must profit by it without losing time. The committee might change its mind; it was important to get away at once, but as he could not find any carriage or other means of transit for me, there was nothing for it but that I must ride. His little mare was very gentle, and "you have nothing to fear," he told me. I was mounted upon her, and he followed me on foot; our first day's journey covered twenty-eight kilomètres.[1] My luggage was very slight, and I cared for nothing but my little dog, for of all that I had loved, nothing remained to me save this. Thus I had insisted on taking her with me, though M. Bonvent had warned me that Mademoiselle Melon did not like dogs. "Coquette will stay in my room," I answered, "Mademoiselle Melon need not see her; nothing would make me give up the little creature that both my father and aunt cared for." I was very tired when we arrived at Decize, a little town upon the Loire, where I passed the night in the house of some worthy people who treated me with the greatest kindness. Next day we started again, but this time it was I who followed M. Bonvent, who had procured a horse at Decize; I was told while there that the one I rode went by the name of "the nieces' mare," because it was always sent

[1] Twenty-eight kilomètres, or nearly eighteen miles.—*Translator's note.*

to fetch Mademoiselle Melon's nieces when they went to visit her. Thus she had other nieces as well as me; important news! it gave me great pleasure, for it suggested companionship. We had still four full leagues to cover, during which I employed myself in dreaming over the happy life that awaited me with my aunt, by whose generosity I had escaped from so great a burden of isolation and poverty. I pictured her to myself as a charming old lady, in spite of her great age; she could not be less than beautiful with so good a heart, that had led her to take an interest in me whom she did not know, that had made her come with such compassion to my help. Ah! she could indeed rely on my gratitude! She had been so good to me, that I was sure she must be beautiful. Thus by the time I arrived at Ombre, I had imagined a delightful portrait of my aunt and her qualities. My heart beat violently as the door was opened, and leaving Coquette in the courtyard, I tremblingly followed M. Bonvent, who led me into the presence of Mademoiselle Melon.

I found her at her toilette. She was seated on a low stool while her maid crimped her very white hair, dressing it in a knot high on her head. It was a most unbecoming position; she had a large forehead, round and reddened eyes, a big nose with wide open nostrils, enormous hands and arms, and a figure somewhat twisted. She said to me in a shrill voice, "Good day, Mademoiselle des Écherolles," and made me sit down in front of her. My illusions had all vanished, and feeling terribly taken aback I seated myself timidly, and answered as best I could the questions that she addressed to me. Presently Coquette added to my embarrassment, for, uneasy at losing sight of me, she rushed in as soon as the door was opened. At the sight of the poor little beast, wet, muddy, and unkempt, I felt myself grow pale; but when my aunt, in her sharp voice, cried, "Turn out that dog!" her maid remarked that she thought it belonged to me. I could only utter a trembling "yes." "Ah, if that is

the case," Mademoiselle Melon returned more gently, "it can remain." Encouraged by her graciousness, I made my apologies for bringing the little creature with me; I explained the reasons I had for being so deeply attached to her, and promised to keep her henceforward in my room. "No," said my aunt quite amiably, "bring her with you whenever you come to see me, it will give me pleasure." When we went presently to dinner, M. Bonvent saw with astonishment that Coquette had already installed herself in my aunt's good graces. If I had known her better, I would perhaps have appreciated more highly so great a favour.

I was lodged in a small room called "the nieces' room," in a cottage outside the courtyard, situated on a busy road. My aunt asked me if I were nervous; when I answered that I was not, I was taken to my lodging, the package of my clothes was carried in before me, and I was left with a "good night." I locked my door and sat down to think over things; I had never yet felt myself so completely alone. Since my arrival I had met, as it were, with surprise on surprise, and it seemed to me strange, not to say extraordinary, to be taken away from Écherolles only to be shut up in this small chamber all by myself. It was on the ground floor, a hook fastened the shutter so insufficiently that a single blow would have burst it open; no one lived in the house, and had I needed help it would have been impossible to make myself heard. Indeed I might have been carried off bodily, with or without my own consent, and it would never have been discovered. All this, unexpected as it was, fairly bewildered me, and to change my thoughts I began to examine my room. Here is what it contained: a bed, the roof of which was in paper, the curtains of grey linen edged with blue satin; a coverlet of blue cotton, a large old armchair in yellow, a straw-seated chair, and a table. The walls were whitewashed; there was a small window, a very

large fireplace, and, in a corner, two shelves which held a "History of China" in ten or twelve volumes.

When I had finished this rapid examination, a feeling difficult to define stirred within me. It was not that I wanted anything better. I would have blushed at such a thought; but there was something in my surroundings that impressed me as desultory, as incoherent, that oppressed me and inspired in me a kind of fear for which I could give no reason. My first night at Ombre was an unquiet one.

In the morning Mademoiselle Melon came to see me; she talked to me by turns with kindness and with a rough severity, and I, who had hoped to find in her all that I had lost, was both astonished and grieved. However, this disagreeable impression was soon effaced by the memory of all I owed her; gratitude made me feel that I was bound to make myself happy, and the early days of my stay at Ombre were pleasant though monotonous. Wondering still that Mademoiselle Melon should have thought of me, profoundly touched by a kindness I had done nothing to deserve, I in return did my best to please her, and I succeeded. I studied her tastes and her habits, taking care to conform myself to both, so as to make up in this way my deficiencies in everything else. She often spoke to me of my family, when I hung upon her every word. I thus learnt that she had spent several years in her youth with my grandmother, her aunt, and it was to the grateful remembrance of this that I owed her generous support, as she felt it her duty to return to the granddaughter something of all that she herself had received from the grandmother. Very soon, as I grew accustomed to her tone and her manners, so different from those of my own aunt, I forgot everything but her kindness and her benevolence.

Mademoiselle Melon had great wit and originality in her ideas; she added an excellent education to a prodigious memory, and had a large acquaintance with the society of her youth, but she ignored the world of

a later day, and had no conception of the Revolution. When she learnt that the committee had possessed itself of her house she was all fire and flame; and whenever it occurred to her thoughts she would fall into a fresh fury. It is quite certain that some of her rash speeches would have cost her her life if, as I have already said, M. Bonvent had not succeeded in keeping her quietly at home where she was; daily she talked of starting for Nevers, but there was always something put in the way, and in the end, habit helping to make her captive, she settled down definitively in the country. At eighty years old one does not travel without making many preparations for it; it was easier and more comfortable to rail at the committee from the corner of her own hearth.

It was during the height of the Terror and some time before my arrival that the pleasing proposal (!) of marriage, of which I have spoken, was made to her. It was never known whether the peasant was simply an ambitious fool or whether he had been the tool of some ill-bred joker, for he was not seen again in the neighbourhood. Many young persons of good birth, however, did not escape like my aunt, for, whether by weakness or in the hope of saving their parents from death, they consented to these shameful alliances, and lost therein not only their wealth but the hope that had been held out to them of protection for their family. There was nothing more terrible than these enforced marriages; one of my cousins, who was very handsome, being thus put in requisition, replied resolutely that she was engaged already to a soldier of the Republic, and that she was determined to be faithful to a defender of the Nation who, at this very moment, was exposing himself to every danger for her sake, and was ready to spill his blood for her. Her declaration was applauded, and she was allowed to keep herself free for her republican soldier, who only existed in her imagination!

My stay at Ombre, grateful as I was, did me little

good; I was too much thrown in upon myself, and deprived even of the care, the advice, and the affection of my nurse, I felt myself terribly isolated. Sometimes I opened that "History of China," only to be repulsed by lists of long barbaric names, whereupon I threw it aside; perhaps I would have found it interesting if I had persevered, but no one encouraged me to do so, no one advised me as to this or anything else, no one ever thought of my education. For more than a year I had had no opportunities either for reading or writing; I had no money to buy paper, whether to write on or to draw; I had scarcely even the means for doing any work, and my aunt, in spite of her kindness, never observed it.

Here was my life at Ombre. At nine o'clock in the morning I went to bid her good morning. As soon as her coffee was brought to her, five or six cats, called together by repeated *miaous* from her maid, arrived from all the corners of the courtyard to share their mistress's breakfast; when it was finished they withdrew by the same road by which they had come, that is to say, by the window. I followed the cats, with this difference, that I went out by the door; this proceeding was repeated every day, without the smallest variation. I returned at noon; but noon with her was half-past eleven everywhere else, for as my aunt's enormous appetite regulated her watch, and her watch regulated the house, everything took place there half-an-hour earlier than anywhere else. To prevent all discussion on this point, she had herself broken the springs of all the clocks, so that no one in the house besides herself could know the exact hour. On the days when she was specially hungry, a little push to the hand of her watch set it forward half-an-hour; then taking her cane and crossing the courtyard to go to the dining-room, she would declare herself astonished to find that dinner was not ready. The cook would cry out that it was not finished cooking; that it was only eleven o'clock yet—and she

was quite right, when my aunt would reply, "Look at my watch; it is noon."

When the hands had not been pushed too far, I generally arrived in time to accompany her to the dining-room; but sometimes, do what I would, I could not always avoid being late, and this displeased her. After dinner I went with her to her room and stayed there till four o'clock; my armchair was set ready for me at a table, and under no pretext was I allowed to move or to change my place. Sitting very still, I busied myself with my work, and assisted at the visit made by the *curé* every day at the same hour.

This *curé*,[1] as will be understood, no longer said the Mass, as he had had all the complaisance for the Nation that she had expected from him (in those days everything was done in the name of the nation); the tranquillity which he had throughout enjoyed was only gained by his obedience to every suggestion, on every point. His visits were long; sometimes at four o'clock he was still talking, trying by his conversation to distract and amuse my aunt, and so repay her for all that she gave him. At this hour I withdrew to return at six; in winter, at five. How long those winter evenings were!

On my return I found my aunt sitting at one side of the fire, and Babet, her maid, at the other; my armchair, placed in front of it, was almost in the middle of the room. The fire was composed of two logs crossed, giving little warmth or flame; there was no other light, and I was only fifteen years old! At first I did not suffer from it; the least complaint would have seemed to me ingratitude, and I imagined that all persons of over eighty lived like this, and it was my duty to put up with it. Besides I was fond of Mademoiselle Melon;

[1] At this time no priests, even those who had taken the oath, were allowed to officiate; the churches were shut or converted into Temples of Reason. The statue of this new deity was placed on an altar for public reverence; often women of loose morals impersonated the goddess, and displayed themselves in the scantiest garments to the gaze of the crowd. . . . Certainly, in these cases, Reason was unveiled.

her conversation was amusing, and when she was in a good temper she told me many interesting stories of her youth,[1] or else she made me recount to her the misfortunes I had come through, and the time passed rapidly. However as the novelty wore off, and my aunt, less disposed to talk, fell back into silence, the hours grew very long, and the darkness oppressive, and in spite of myself I fell asleep; my aunt considered this a want of respect, and complained of it. After this I procured a spindle and set myself to spinning by the light from the fire in order to keep myself awake, though without always succeeding in this. At seven o'clock Mademoiselle Melon's supper was brought to her, as in the evening she did not leave her room; it would have been difficult for her to cross the court-yard in the dark. Moreover the doctors, alarmed by her enormous appetite, had forbidden her to take any supper; but she considered that she obeyed them sufficiently by not sitting down to table, and ate to satisfaction, that is, most copiously. I went to take my supper alone with her man of business, and returned as quickly as possible to relieve Babet, who waited for my arrival to go and take her own supper; in her absence I was allowed to take her place by the fire, and as Mademoiselle Melon had remarked that I found

[1] One of these stories struck me so much that I cannot refrain from quoting it here. "When I was a little girl," said Mdlle. Melon, "my grandmother came to visit us at Nevers, and on her return to Paris took me with her. As she was very fond of me I was almost always with her; and I frequently went with her to a convent where she visited an old nun who was more than eighty years old. These visits did not amuse me, and I was not interested in her stories of the past; however, one day, when she began, 'When I was a little girl . . . ' I listened with all my ears, for being little myself, it appealed to my understanding. I have never forgotten all that she then told of Catherine de Medicis; how, being very superstitious and curious to know the future, she had caused the Wheel of Fortune to be turned in order to know how long the successors of her son should reign. She sighed with envy over the reign of Louis XIII. The wheel turned so long for Louis XIV. that she cried out several times, 'Why cannot I live then!' and the reign of Louis XV. excited the same desire in her. But scarcely had the wheel begun to turn for Louis XVI. than it stopped."

crossing the great courtyard immediately after dinner very trying, often in the midst of wind, rain, and snow; as she had observed that I often arrived wet through and speechless with cold, she always had a bright and hot fire ready at which I might warm myself. There, without any other light, I waited for the return of Babet, who sat at table far longer than I did. When she reappeared my day was done, and I withdrew to my own room, happy to be able to warm myself at my ease.

I cannot deny that I found such a life very trying. There were evenings when my aunt was in a bad humour, when it was impossible to say a word that did not displease her; everything was wrong, I angered her whether I spoke or whether I did not speak, she accused me of being dull and stupid, a reproach that made me the more awkward, and certainly did not help me to be amusing. Do what I would, I could do nothing right. It was quite natural that my aunt, at her age, should have some little inequalities of temper, but I suffered much from them, and was only really happy when once in my own room, enjoying the liberty of solitude, and forgetting the day's annoyances in dreaming beside my fire. These annoyances, no doubt, were good for me, in teaching me patience and self-restraint, but I did not realise this at the time.

I scarcely know how I passed my time at Ombre without books, without society, almost without occupation of any kind. Mademoiselle Melon rarely came to my room, and on looking back I cannot help smiling when I recall the dismay that we all felt when she did make her appearance amongst us. I think I have mentioned that the kitchen and dining-room were in the building opposite the wing in which she was lodged. As soon as she appeared at her door, every one fled before her; she walked very slowly, leaning on her cane, the swelling of her legs being so great that all movement was difficult. Only the points of

her toes could be thrust into the little slippers that fell from her feet at every step. She talked to herself all the way. "*Mon Dieu!*" she would say, gathering together with her stick the little bits of wood she saw lying about, "what waste! what disorder! There is enough here to supply a household! I always said these creatures would ruin me, yes, ruin me!" By the time she arrived at the kitchen there was no one there, all having taken to their heels while she was crossing the courtyard. "What a fire! I always said these creatures would ruin me!" Immediately she set to work pulling off the logs and scattering the small wood; she had already had one of the dogs removed from the hearth to prevent too great a quantity of fuel being used. Groaning over the failure of this precaution, she hobbled round the kitchen, inspecting everything with a minute and angry attention, lifting up and looking into every pot and saucepan. At last, after repeated calls, Nannette, the cook, would appear, and the storm burst over her head; then it was the composition of the dinner or of one of the dishes which led to a fresh altercation; ultimately my aunt retired. Scarcely had she turned her back when the logs were again on the fire, the small wood gathered round them, and all was the same as before. If she chanced to turn towards my room, the same absurd panic seized on me also. I could hear her in the distance railing over the wastefulness of her servants, pausing at every few steps to rake together a little heap of broken wood, and repeating continually, "I always said that they would ruin me." . . . At the sound of her voice I took alarm, arranged my room as well as I could, and went to meet her with all the respect that was her due, and the best manners that I could muster; nevertheless, she always found plenty with which to find fault. She complained greatly of my lack of orderliness, and at last, to escape her reprimands, I used to hide everything between the mattresses of my bed. She forgot to observe when

she scolded me for leaving my things about, that I had no place to put them but the drawer of a writing-table. She would wind up by giving me lectures on economy, which were in the main very excellent, but which sometimes were rather trying. "In winter you will go to bed without a light," she said, for instance; "the light of the fire is quite enough." I cannot deny that these rounds of hers were rather terrible!

As my aunt so seldom left her own rooms, she was really only mistress when within them, for she knew nothing of the disorders that existed outside. M. Bonvent, her man of business, was the real master of the house, and of the estate on which we resided, of which property he never rendered any account to Mademoiselle Melon. Fortunately the rest of her revenues was paid directly into her own hands. She succeeded in coming to an understanding with him that he should pay a share of the household expenses, but only after long and repeated altercations; this sort of capitulation, however, provided us for a time with something like peace. Presently the discussions began again; the mistress spoke of her rights audaciously set aside, the servitor refused obedience, and declining to come at her call, withdrew into open revolt. My aunt then made me carry her messages to M. Bonvent, who received them with a very bad grace. When I returned with his replies, I was stormed at by Mademoiselle Melon, so that I felt myself much to be pitied between the two. Personally, however, I cannot in any way complain of M. Bonvent's relations with me. He was said to be irregular in his conduct; I can only repeat that I never heard one word from him that could offend me, a thing the more to his credit in that, as I cannot deny, he often came drunk to supper, betraying his condition by the extreme care he took never to open his lips to me.

I am almost inclined to apologise for all these minute and perhaps unnecessary details; but after all, our life is made up of a succession of such details,

of more or less importance. I should like to make my account of them amusing; but if it does not prove so, my readers will the better understand how hard all these trifles were to put up with. Great events usually take up small space in our existence; it is the little things that fill each day, that are with us always, that make up the joy or the misery of life.

These two people constantly at war with each other, gave occasion sometimes to very droll scenes, and though the following story has small value, yet it is so characteristic that I cannot resist the pleasure of telling it.

Mademoiselle Melon ordered our supper every day, as was quite natural; but to save herself trouble, or for reasons of economy, she gave us always the same dishes. M. Bonvent grew tired in time of eating nothing but hashed beef and stewed rabbit, and took upon himself the business of ordering the meal, and of ordering it to his taste. Thenceforward we had excellent fish, poultry in abundance, and everything else that was good. I do not know whether Mademoiselle Melon suspected anything, but one evening she asked me what I had just eaten.

"Fricasséed chicken, aunt."

"What! chicken?"

"Yes, aunt; it was very good."

"Indeed!"

She said no more, but before she went to bed she sent for Nannette and made a great commotion. The cook, however, replied quite calmly: "Reassure yourself, Mademoiselle, your orders have been obeyed; but Mademoiselle des Écherolles is so absent-minded, she is always thinking of other things, and must have imagined that she was eating chicken!" She succeeded in so thoroughly persuading her mistress that next morning Mademoiselle Melon laughed at my "absent-mindedness," and told me that what I had taken for fricasséed chicken was only hashed beef. It was now my turn to reply, "Indeed, hashed beef!" But my

air of surprise was looked on as a confession, and my reputation as a dreamer was irrevocably established.[1] I was even obliged to do my best to sustain it; for my aunt, once her suspicions had been aroused, frequently questioned me, and I was wont to reply, "I don't remember what we had for supper, aunt."

"How amazing!" she would cry; "and you have just risen from the table!"

I have no doubt it *was* amazing; but I had to think of poor Nannette, who came to me daily in great distress. "Have pity on my difficulties, Mademoiselle, for I don't know what to do. Mademoiselle Melon orders one thing and M. Bonvent another. If I don't obey him *he* will turn me out, and if you tell my mistress *she* will turn me out. And if between them I lose my place, I shall be penniless."

My aunt's estate was a sort of desert, so few people came there; indeed, when a visitor did make his appearance, he was not always very well received. Even when it pleased her to make a guest welcome, she was convinced that he would stay too long, and took means to get rid of him, especially if he chanced to be a neighbour who had invited himself to dinner. Thus, at the very first movement he made after rising from table, were it only to shift on his chair, she was ready for him. "What, Monsieur, are you bent on leaving me already?" she cried with immense politeness; "you are depriving me so soon of your agreeable society! Well, well! Mademoiselle des Écherolles, run quick and see if the horses are ready, and do not put Monsieur to the inconvenience of waiting." And Mademoiselle des Écherolles ran, flew, to carry her message, while the visitor, in astonishment, was thus courteously turned out of doors. It was a diverting way of getting rid of people; but I was young, and did not find my share in it amusing. Some who were so treated grew angry, and never came a second time; others only laughed. But this way of behaving

[1] I must allow that since then I have come to deserve it.

certainly tended to make visits infrequent, and condemned me to solitude.

Persons who live much alone and whose fortune permits them to indulge their fancies, are apt to allow them to degenerate into habits so tenacious that nothing can break through them. This was the case with Mademoiselle Melon, who sacrificed everything to the habits that enchained her. Charitable and compassionate as she was, always ready to help and sympathise in other people's troubles, kind-hearted and constantly generous, her eccentricity (which arose from the indulgence of her own opinions and habits) often made her seem hard and cold. Thus one day when, without knowing that I was running counter to one of her whims, I went to ask her to send for a surgeon to draw a tooth for me, she replied at once—

"What! you have toothache?"

"Yes, aunt, and it is terribly bad."

"That is your fault. I have never had toothache, and as long as you are under my care you shall not have one out."

I repeat it, she was very kind-hearted; but I had come across one of her pet convictions, and I had to give way before it. As it happened, that unhappy tooth had already given me many wakeful nights at Écherolles, while I was under arrest there. Worn out with the pain, I sent for a surgeon to draw it out. "I don't go to aristocrats," was all the reply I received. As I did not wish to lay myself open to another answer of the same sort, I kept my tooth. This time my aunt's whim had had the same result as the surgeon's Jacobinism.

The *curé*, or priest in charge of the village, was the only person who made daily visits to Mademoiselle Melon. She partly maintained him, for he was very poor; the nation paid its priests badly or not at all, even when they had done everything she asked of them. He had not married, simply because he had found himhimself always refused; he complained of it quite

openly, and hoped for better luck some day. What I could not understand was the contradictions these unhappy priests fell into. When one of his brothers of the cloth married, it was he himself who gave the nuptial benediction according to the usual forms of that Church in which neither of them any longer believed, and whose faith they had denied. He even said to me quite seriously, in speaking of this union, "This priest is a friend of mine, and a very pious man; I could not refuse him my ministrations."

I was afraid of the *curé*, and would not receive him in my apartment, being firmly convinced that nothing is more dangerous than a bad ecclesiastic. He made up for it during his visits to my aunt, profiting by her deafness to say a great many things to me that I would never have permitted elsewhere; for he knew that if I dared to complain to Mademoiselle Melon, she would not believe me. He offered me books to read; a species of wisdom beyond my age, which I had learnt from my misfortunes, made me decline them, while at the same time I freely accepted those that M. Bonvent offered me. "I have a great many books, Mademoiselle," he said to me very frankly, "but there are only two of them that I could venture to lend you, a Life of Turenne, and another of Prince Eugene." These I accepted without scruple, and had no cause to regret it.

It was during the earlier days of my stay at Ombre that I received a small sum of money from some unknown person; a note with no signature informed me that the money belonged to me. For a long time I had no idea whence it came, but at last I discovered that it was from my nurse, my dear good nurse, who thinking that I must be in want of money, did violence to her timidity and demanded to be appointed guardian of the seals at Écherolles, in order that she could send me what she made by it. Such a fidelity as this is truly rare.

CHAPTER XVI

A friend of my brother's persuades my aunt to send me to Moulins on family affairs—Madame Grimauld—A curator is appointed—News of my father—I receive what my aunt left in charge for me—I return to Ombre—My cousin Mdlle. de Lespinasse—We keep my aunt's *fête*—My cousin goes home—My father's return—We start for Moulins.

THE monotony of our life was pleasantly broken by a visit from a friend of my elder brother's, M. Languinier, from Nevers, who, though he did not know me personally, took so much interest in my family that he ventured, upon my account, to present himself to my aunt. Fortunately, being well-bred and agreeable, he won her good graces, and although the charm of his conversation did not wholly save him from the usual system of dismissal, he was made fairly welcome. He spoke to me of my affairs with friendly interest, and urged me to occupy myself seriously with them, both for my own sake and my father's. "Remember, you are the only representative of the family here," he said, "it is your duty to try to preserve for your father everything that has not already been sold. Think over this and act accordingly."

I had now been several months at Ombre, and during this time our poor France had made great strides towards tranquillity and order, and towards a freedom unfettered by tyranny and chains. The prisons had been to a great extent thrown open, and many of those crowded into them were restored to liberty. The orders as to surveillance were falling into disuse, and, weary at last of blood-spilling, the honours of the guillotine were now reserved for persons of recognised importance. We, who were of

small account, were in comparative safety. M. Languinier, pointing out all this, explained to my aunt the steps I ought to take, and which the liberty now accorded to us rendered possible. It was urgent that a curator should be appointed to look after my interests, and he declared that since this could only be done at Moulins, I ought to go there at once for this object. Mademoiselle Melon approved both his proposal and my desire to carry it out, and promised graciously to send me thither. This was my second journey on horseback. I rode fifty-six kilomètres in one short December day, arriving at Madame Grimauld's house worn out with snow and wind, so tired that I could scarcely stand, but very happy. She welcomed me as tenderly as if I were a daughter returning home after a long absence, and in embracing her and Josephine I forgot many sorrows.

It was then that I learnt all that I owed to Madame Grimauld, and her noble determination to share my terrible fate, had I indeed been sent to the Depôt. I shall not try to express what I felt. My gratitude to her and my horror at the thought of what I had escaped were both beyond words.

I lived in her house for a month, very happy in being there, but frequently suffering much from constraint and awkwardness. In watching Josephine, who had never been separated from her mother, I realised for the first time all that I had lost and all that was lacking in me ; for it can easily be understood that I had many deficiencies, and I was humiliated by the great difference that I perceived between us. Her refined and graceful manners, the ease of good society, and the pretty voice and accent which made whatever she said pleasant to listen to, were very charming in Josephine. I could not hope to equal her, but I endeavoured to learn from her as far as I felt myself capable. Physically we were as far apart as beauty from plainness, but this did not disturb me. I was as proud of her good looks as if they had been my own,

and accepted it as only natural that she should be handsome and admired, for it had always been so since we were children together. Besides, such a friendship as ours had no jealousy in it.

Such hours as these were very sweet to me, and after so much loneliness and fear I felt it was a joy to be able to talk freely and in perfect confidence. I had been forced to live so much within myself, as it were, to keep back every thought within my own heart, that the frank and simple speech of my friends was a deep delight to me, and everything about them, manner, style, and language, recalled to my mind my own happy past, and the surroundings of my childhood. Yes, such hours were sweet, indeed.

None of my relatives were willing to act as my curator, having but just come out of prison and not yet feeling themselves in sufficient security. They met together and named for the purpose one M. Charles, a lawyer, who at once asked for and obtained a sum of money for me as a provisional assistance. This was, I think, the only thing he ever troubled to do! I received two thousand francs in assignats, which were already worth little. After this I went to Écherolles to see my sister and her nurse, both of whom I found well. I laid in a stock of useful provisions for them, and leaving a good part of my assignats with my nurse, I returned to Madame Grimauld. Josephine and her mother both did embroidery for sale, as did all my cousins. In those days the impoverished nobles worked for the newly-become rich, and whether in prison or under arrest in their own houses, they made use of their time to provide for their necessities. Several ladies were allowed to remain as prisoners in their own apartments, though this was a costly favour, and greatly envied by those who could not afford it; one, I have been told, who was confined at the Carmelites' solicited it vainly. Her health was good; it was not thought necessary to indulge her! However, she occupied a small cell all to herself, and having pro-

cured a bundle of vine-branches, she carefully calculated the hour of the doctor's arrival, and made up a big fire, exerting herself as violently as she could in front of the very hot but short-lived flames. When the doctor did arrive, he found her perspiring violently, flushed scarlet, and with a galloping pulse, and as he saw nothing round him which could have caused such a high fever, he declared at once that she was seriously ill. She immediately began to cry out that they must let her die in her own bed, and presently they actually carried her home. She went to bed, and no doubt slept very comfortably, delighted at having gained her point. I presume that she kept up her illness, for prudence' sake, during a reasonable time.

Shortly after I had been at Écherolles, I received news of my father from a Swiss woman, who proved to me that she came from him by bringing me his tablets, which were of no value to any one but myself, but had once been my mother's. She also gave me a letter from him written on Italian gauze and hidden in the lining of her dress, which she unsewed before us, but as soon as I had read these few dear words, Madame Grimauld persuaded me to burn them.[1] I wrote to my father a short note in reply, without, however, adding either name or date; and I gave the woman the rest of my assignats to take to him, regretting I had so little to send. This in the end proved very lucky, as the messenger, betraying the many who had trusted in her, kept everything for herself. I think she came from Lausanne, but I will not give her name here, to bear the shame of having so abused our misfortunes.

Very soon after this woman had gone away Madame Fabrice sent for me and put into my hands the sum of twenty-five louis in silver. She explained that my aunt had left it with her to be given to the first of our family who should return to Moulins, and find them-

[1] Madame Grimauld had keen perceptions. She did not like this woman, whom she declared was not to be trusted, and very soon after this was proved to be the case.

selves in need. "I should have given it to you before this," she said, "when you passed through on your way to Ombre, but you were accompanied last time by a suspicious person, and I did not feel free to speak to you of my commission." I cannot express the emotion that came over me, as I received this sum of money that had come directly, though at such a long interval, from my aunt. She had then foreseen all these terrible events, and it was from the very arms of death that she sent me this succour as a last sign of her tenderness and love. She herself indeed was dead, but her affection still followed me, provided for me, protected me, and gave me courage to live.

I soon was obliged to leave Madame Grimauld and return to Ombre. I cried bitterly at parting from her and from Josephine, for I had so quickly fallen back into the habit of being loved and cared for that I felt as if I were leaving the society of dear friends to go out into a desert. It was hard to make up my mind to it! Nevertheless, short as my stay in Moulins had been, I knew that I had profited by it; I had learnt much in mixing with my many relatives, who were cultivated and well-educated people, and welcomed me among them with affection; I had recovered something of the manners suitable to my position, and this helped me to gain confidence in myself, and to overcome my timidity and awkwardness. Above all, I had learnt to appreciate the kindness and care with which I felt myself surrounded, and profoundly touched by so much indulgence, I carried away with me memories sweet enough to brighten any desert. . . . I took with me several of our effects that friends had kept hidden, in order to return them to us. My wardrobe, better furnished than it had been, allowed me now to dress like every one else; my aunt indeed had already given me a gown, so that my appearance no longer called for pity.

I arrived at Ombre too late to go to my aunt, so I took my way straight to my room, impatient to meet

the companion who was there awaiting me. The servant who had come with the horses to fetch me had informed me that a cousin had arrived during my absence: this was Mademoiselle Leblanc de Lespinasse, and if I had never seen her, I had often heard of her. I felt as if I were about to meet an old friend. I was scarcely off my horse before I was calling out, "Here I am!" I was so delighted to have a companion; and if she had been fifty years old, I should still have looked on her as young in comparison with Mademoiselle Melon. As a matter of fact, my cousin was quite young, though considerably older than I, and she was, moreover, very pretty. She had charming manners, a very quick wit and remarkable intelligence, and was, in short, all that I could desire as a companion. Thus I was quite ready to attach myself to her and from the first moment our friendship was reciprocal, while very soon I added to this a deep respect, not on account of her greater age, but inspired by her love of algebra! I could not comprehend a taste which I had thought confined to men alone; but when I saw that, on laying aside her abstruse studies, she could sew exquisitely, and was exceedingly clever in fabricating all sorts of feminine *chiffons*, I could not but wonder at the pleasure she found in such different occupations, and admire the variety of her talents.

I was very well pleased to have a companion during the long dark winter evenings, and although my aunt, irritated by our chatter, tried us sorely by forbidding us to speak to each other, there were two of us, which made a great difference to me. Each could guess what the other was feeling, if we could not express it, for our chairs were carefully placed at such a distance apart that it was impossible to hear without speaking loud. My aunt wished to know what we talked about, and her hearing, though bad, was of a kind not to be trusted, as she generally caught whatever was not intended for her ears. We dared not, therefore, utter a

word that was not meant for her to hear. During these enforced silences it seemed to me that my thoughts so accumulated within me that they must burst their way forth; my brain worked at feverish speed, and it was a real suffering to have to stifle the ideas that "boiled up" into words, or to keep them back till we were safely installed by the fire in our own room. It was a consolation to me that my cousin suffered as much as I did, for "pain that we share is already halved." What could we do to break the monotony of this existence that lay upon us so heavily? I was dying to see something new, to say something fresh; I longed, in short, to make *one* day at least a little different from all those that went before it and followed after.

My aunt's *fête* presently gave us the chance, and we resolved to take advantage of it. St. Anthony's Day was drawing near; we decided that we would celebrate it with a brilliance hitherto unknown at Ombre, and our preparations in themselves brightened many of our monotonous days, since in such an out-of-the-way place we could only carry out our plans, simple as they were, with a world of trouble. In my delight I proposed to trim our gowns with garlands of green leaves, and was carried away with thoughts of wreaths and posies, when my cousin was unkind enough to destroy my illusions by pointing to the window, out of which we could see the ground deeply covered with snow. For once I was so absorbed in St. Anthony's Day that I forgot that other—the 17th of January.[1]

At last the sun dawned on the memorable morning. My cousin had begged her uncle to come on a visit to our aunt, and M. de Chaligny, faithful to his promise, arrived with his son Frederick early enough for us to concert our plans with him. He was to beg an invitation to dinner from Mademoiselle Melon. He was

[1] It is scarcely necessary to note that this was the anniversary of the king's death.—*Trans.*

her nephew, and so much of a favourite with her that of her own accord she sometimes asked him to pass a few days at Ombre. This we knew, and had counted upon for our project.

On rising from table, my cousin and I slipped away one after the other, leaving M. de Chaligny charged with the responsibility of the after-dinner hour with my aunt. We had begged him to be very amusing, so that she should not notice our absence; as it was, from time to time a remark, "Where are these young ladies?" made him redouble his amiabilities. "These young ladies" were busy putting on their white frocks and arranging their little presents. We had sent to the nearest town for such things as bonbons, cakes, dried fruits, chestnuts, and oranges, the only suitable trifles that the time of year permitted. We then went to collect our people, who were waiting for us in the kitchen; and feeling sure that we needed a rehearsal, we took possession of a worthy peasant who chanced to be there, and made him sit down and understand that he represented Mademoiselle Melon. We curtsied profoundly, and then recited the verses we had composed in her honour, which the good fellow took for Latin! "It's very beautiful," he assured us, "only I don't understand it!" . . . I too thought my verses very fine, for they had cost me a great deal of trouble.

At last we started on our way, not feeling very sure as to what sort of reception awaited us. Jacques, my aunt's faithful man-servant, went in to announce us. She looked at him in surprise, for at such an unusual hour she knew he would not appear without an important reason.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "there is a company of persons outside who desire your permission to see you."

"But you know, Jacques, I do not receive any one——"

"Mademoiselle, I told them so, but they said that would not matter; they would not stay long."

"But I will not receive them. It is night, and no fit hour for visits. Send them away!"

"That is difficult, Mademoiselle; for they are waiting outside your door." (We, who could hear all this, were stifled with our laughter.)

"What sort of people are they?" asked my aunt, getting up from her chair, and standing in great perturbation by the fire. "Do you know them, Jacques?"

"No, Mademoiselle."

"So late, too!" she cried in despair. "So late! I shall be obliged to give supper to all these people; it is shameful, such effrontery! M. de Chaligny, light the candles, quick; how slow you are!" My cousin, laughing to himself over her excitement, was already twisting a piece of paper for the purpose. "What are you doing? What——? How slow you are! Here are the matches. What an idea to come so late!" Still standing by the fire, she looked anxiously towards the door.

As soon as the room was lit up, the "company" that had been announced advanced solemnly towards her, and, forming a semicircle in front of her, sang in chorus a little song that I had composed for the occasion. Her astonishment continued; my aunt did not recognise her own domestics! Then came our turn; we came forward, each with a basket of bonbons in one hand and a bouquet in the other, followed by Frederick with a huge apple-tart. We recited our verses; my aunt, still standing and completely bewildered, looked about her without seeing or understanding anything. More lights were brought in, till the room looked quite gay; each in turn presented his offering and his congratulations, we broke into a merry confusion, and in good prose wished my aunt a happy *fête*, embracing her and laughing at her astonishment. At last she began to understand and, laughing also, recognised the "strangers" who were crowding her room; having no supper to provide for us, she

quickly recovered her good humour, and looking with satisfaction on all our presents, she thanked us for them most graciously. I never saw my aunt so pleased. The rest of the evening was quite gay, and we separated at last, very happy and very tired.

Next day my aunt asked us a great many questions about our little festival, and seemed to enjoy listening to all we told her.

"You stretched out your hand to take my basket, aunt," I added, as we came to an end; "but I held on tight till I had finished my verses." (Oh, vanity of authors! what do you not lead to?)

"What verses?" . . . She had never listened to them! She had been so busy looking at the tarts and the bonbons, the oranges, and the *plaisirs*,[1] that she had had no attention for anything else!

"Oh, aunt! such fine verses! What a humiliation for me!"

"Really, did you say verses? I had no idea of it. Come, repeat them to me now; it will be the same thing." . . . And there we were, playing over again the last night's scene.

My cousin, whose creative talents had caused the distraction so wounding to my vanity, had a right to the greater share of the day's triumph. I was delighted to hear my aunt thanking her so graciously, for she was often very severe to her, the strong disapprobation that her family showed for all priests who had taken the oath annoying Mademoiselle Melon, who considered it offensive for her friend the *curé*. This frequently caused regrettable scenes, as she chose to look upon these views as an insult also to herself. I have often noticed that the worst crime in those who do not agree with us is that their opinion seems to convey a reproach upon our own, and we are not willing to accord *them* the freedom of thought that we so largely demand for ourselves. The *curé*, piqued with this attitude towards him, took care to encourage my aunt's resentment,

[1] Small rolled wafers, still exceedingly popular.—*Trans.*

and this led to new difficulties and discussions, and a greater constraint than ever in our little circle.

'Just at this time I made the acquaintance of a Swiss who had lived for a good while in the neighbourhood —a worthy man, it was said, who wished to return to his own country. Such opportunities were rare, and I hastened to confide to him the money I had received from Madame Fabrice; I gave him my father's address, and all the loving messages that I could imagine. My cousin also charged him with a watch to be delivered to M. de Saxy, her uncle. Alas! it was the same thing over again, and nothing reached its destination. I had no luck as regards Switzerland, that was evident; but what losses these were, that I had no means of repairing!

Spring passed by pleasantly and quietly; walks and reading filled our days, and I found they went by too quickly, for my cousin, called home by her father, was going to leave me. Presently, indeed, I was alone again, and the solitude was greater than ever; but this time it did not last long, for the crisis which had ruined and killed so many worthy people seemed now to be settling into peace and conciliation. The Lyonnais *emigrés* were all allowed to return to France, my father amongst them; his name was provisionally struck out of the list of *emigrés*, and he was allowed—also provisionally—to regain possession of what belonged to him. He sent me word of this happy state of affairs, and wrote that he would come himself to fetch me, and to thank my aunt for the refuge she had so generously afforded to me. What a joy it was to receive this letter—promise of happiness and peace! I counted every day till my father's arrival; and then—I cannot describe my tears of joy when we met. I had not seen him since my aunt's death; he had everything to tell me—I so much to tell him! He described the dangers he had run in escaping to Switzerland; his anxiety about my fate; and the ignorance in which he had been for so long as to what had become of me.

My Father Returns to France

Mademoiselle Melon listened with interest to his story, looking on him as an actual actor in the great struggle. She was fond of my father, and took pleasure in his conversation. After a week's rest, he asked her permission to take leave, his affairs requiring his presence at Moulins; and I went with him, very grateful to my aunt for her kindness to me, but very, very glad to leave Ombre.

CHAPTER XVII

My father recovers his possessions—I find the silver hidden by my aunt's orders—We divide our time between town and country—Renewed persecutions and our flight—We go back to Lyons—My father again pursued—He escapes—I return to Écherolles.

My father did not know how to sufficiently express his gratitude to all who had in his absence befriended his daughter. I saw Josephine again; dividing our time between town and country, this summer was for me one of the happiest in my life. Our house in Moulins, which the Revolutionary Committee had occupied, was given back to us, and we lodged there whenever we stayed in town; I am not sure whether I noted, at the beginning of my long story, that my aunt des Écherolles had ordered all our silver plate to be hidden in one of the cellars. She had well foreseen the future, saying to me, "If any of us come back, it will be you. . . ." It was indeed I who had at last returned.

We were served by a Wallachian, a prisoner of war, who could speak little French; he was a well-brought-up, respectable young man, whom my father took as his domestic in order to remove him from the horrors of barrack life. I easily made him understand what I wanted, and we went down together into the small cellar where our treasure was hidden. It had not been quite emptied of the foreign wines with which we had filled it, but the greater part had been drunk; only a few stray bottles lay about on the ground, and were still piled in a heap over the very spot where we were now going to dig. We soon

came upon the box, which was broken, so that the silver lay loose in the earth ; and Joseph, quite understanding that it had escaped the clutch of the Jacobins, who had so often entered this cellar, broke into cries of joy over every object he found, convinced that with each he obtained a fresh victory over *these brigands, these thieves.* He was clever at applying the few French words that he had mastered ! . . . All the silver was there. I sent up to my father a basket full of dishes, plates and spoons and forks, &c., and blessed the memory of my aunt, as I do still, for this precaution of hers gave us the wherewithal to live for several years.

There is a kind of double-faced political monster, of which one aspect is calm and benevolent, the other cruel and bloodthirsty, and of which we feel by turns the good and evil influences. This is called *reaction.* When the moderate party was uppermost, all became comparatively tranquil and hope revived in every breast; this was a *reaction.* As soon as the Revolutionaries recovered the power, the Terror, returning at their call, froze the blood in our veins and we turned to seek safety in flight ; again, this was a *reaction.* As a child and young girl I knew nothing else than this, buffeted as I was by every successive storm, ignorant of their causes, seeing only their effects ; when peace returned to us, when the tide of peril threatened to engulf us, I gave myself up with an equal resignation to my fate, repeating, like every one else, "*It is a reaction.*" I did not understand, but I accepted it as an explanation.

Well ! one day that my father had sent me into Moulins on business, I found the town full of excitement; alarming news had been received from Paris, a representative of the people had just arrived, the provisional striking-out of my father's name from the list of *emigrés* had been revoked, and his arrest was already being discussed. It was another reaction. . . . I hurried back to Écherolles with the news, and

before night we had packed up and started on our way to Lyons in a cabriolet, the springs of which we had been too hurried to tighten. At the least jar we were tossed up nearly to the roof, thankful each time if we got off without a broken head. And all this on account of a reaction!

For the same reason we could obtain horses only with great difficulty. Several representatives of the people were travelling towards the south of France, and the postmasters, indignant at so many requisitions, turned a part of their horses out to grass, and kept no more in their stables than were strictly necessary. Thus it was only at the end of five days that we succeeded in reaching Lyons, which was not more than eighteen myriamètres[1] from Moulins; we should indeed have been forced to come to a halt at the last posting-station from want of horses, if our good star had not led a supernumerary mail-coach suddenly to make its appearance. This vehicle was even harder and more jolty than our own, and had only room on it for two persons, while we were three, but I made my entry into Lyons sitting on the knee of our big kindly driver. This, again, was "a reaction."[2]

Next day we went to M. Guichard's house, in the Vaise suburb; it was he who had advised my father to return to France and to profit by the amnesty offered to the fugitives from Lyons. With him we hoped to find a safe asylum in this revival of the Terror, to escape which many persons had, like ourselves, hurried to Lyons, either to stay there in hiding, or to attempt an escape to Switzerland. We met, for instance, the de Bussy family, who had arrived at Lyons at the same

[1] About a hundred and twelve miles.

[2] The diligences of those days were very bad, with slippery leather seats and nothing to catch hold of, so that we were violently tossed about at every jolt. Once I lay almost unconscious where I had been thrown, and I heard the postillion say to the driver, "Don't go on to the pavements, or the poor little lady will be dead before she arrives." His pity went straight to my heart, and if I could have opened my eyes, I am sure he would have read my gratitude in them.

time as we did, in our former flight from Moulins. Like ourselves, they had had many sorrows, and a short return of happiness; like ourselves, they had again been obliged to fly. Very sad and yet consoling were these meetings and their confidences; in relating the dangers we had passed through, we felt anew the joy of escaping from them, but we dreaded those that were still hanging over our heads. . . . Several other persons had taken refuge with M. Guichard, so that we had a little society of our own and lived together peaceably, almost without any communications with outside.

Lyons was then in a very curious condition, divided between two powers. One, the so-called Company of Jesus, was an avenging Nemesis, that threatened, pursued, and attacked the Jacobins continually, awakening in their guilty souls, if not remorse, at least a terror that hung over them night and day. There was no peace for them, even when they were re-established in power, and, seizing on all posts of authority, plunged France once more into misery; they felt, indeed, so great a fear of the mysterious enemy that attacked them silently and unseen, that many among them dared not reappear in prominence, and their appointments remained vacant.

It was said that many young soldiers returning from military service, in which they had fought bravely for their country, found awaiting them neither home, parents, nor the family whom they had been defending, as they thought, at the risk of their lives. The result was that very many of the denouncers were killed in duels; and the number of deaths by this form of private vengeance was appalling. More than this, the young men, exasperated by the horrors they discovered, passed on to stronger and quicker measures; they, in their turn, became the assassins, convinced that they were inflicting a just vengeance. A duel was too great an honour for these men, they said; they assassinated them by night and by day, making

use by turns of cunning and of strength, and finding all means permissible which helped in the work of killing. The bodies were thrown into the Rhône or the Saône, according as to which river was nearer the place of murder; they were carried away by the water, which told no tales. Sometimes, even in full daylight, a man would be pointed out for this public vengeance, by crying, "He is a *matevon*";[1] immediately the unhappy wretch was seized on, stabbed, beaten, torn to pieces, and thrown half-dead into the river, whence he never escaped. The passers-by scarcely paused to look on; it was only a *matevon*. Such a long and infamous persecution had so embittered the sufferers, that they found it only natural and right to return a treatment as horrible as that they had themselves received.

The prisons were crowded with *terrorists* of all ranks—municipals, denouncers generally, guardians of the seals; but the revolutionary authority, returned to power, turned a deaf ear to all reclamations against them, and if it did not dare to set them at large, at least refused to condemn them. Once more the "reaction" raised its head, and this time, determined to have blood for blood, and death for death, it cried out in fury, "Vengeance is mine." The prisons were seized, and an order put into execution whose cold ferocity still freezes my blood; register in hand, the prisoners were called over with a horrible tranquillity, and all those who bore revolutionary names or functions were at once massacred. Thieves, coiners, and other criminals were spared. "For you there are laws," they were told; "we leave you to them." And I have heard that from every side rose cries of "I am only a thief!" . . . It was in one such massacre that Citizen Forêt was killed, along with his shrew of a wife, his son the Municipal, and his *fillâtre*,[2] the worst

[1] *Matevonner*, in the Lyons patois, means to lop, or head, young trees; thus the beheaders of men were nicknamed *matevons*.

[2] *Fillâtre*, one of the hardest and ugliest words in our language, was

of them all. Two priests and an *emigré* were confined at Roanne; they were permitted, or rather urged, to make their escape, and, pausing in their bloody task, the murderers made up amongst them a sum sufficient to take them into Switzerland. Then they returned to their horrible work.

There existed a law which ordered all fathers of *emigrés* to return to the place they lived in in 1792, and to put themselves under surveillance. My father, who had come to Vaise early in August of that year, hoped to conform sufficiently to this law in staying there; but the town of Moulins thought otherwise, and ordered my father to return thither and to report himself for surveillance. My father insisted that he was domiciled at Vaise; Moulins would not listen to reason, and a process was begun against him, which resulted in his condemnation to two years of imprisonment in irons. Several orders of arrest were sent out against him, but without success, as my father always succeeded in making his escape. Thus we began a new era of suffering and persecution.

M. Guichard now gave us a new and touching proof of his courage and affection. He had for many years suffered severely from asthma, to which was added a dropsy, the rapid increase of which prevented him from following any occupation, and gave him great pain. Nevertheless, the desire to help and protect my father made him overcome his sufferings; he asked for and obtained a post in the commune of Vaise, which enabled him to warn us of any coming danger. In fact, all orders of arrest had to pass through his hands; I do not know how he explained the fact that none of those against my father were put into execution. Thanks to this generous devotion, we lived tranquilly and undisturbed, secure in

well suited as a name for this woman. She usually wore a hat called '*à la prise de Toulon*,' garnished with a bouquet, not of flowers, but of swords, cannons, bullets, and bombs. Sometimes there was even a miniature guillotine. It became her well.

his protection; and my younger brother, who had returned to Rive de Gier, where he had been before with M. Mazuyer, came frequently to see us. This gave us some happy days in the midst of our incessant anxieties.

However, M. Guichard's health became worse and worse; soon he could no longer leave his room, and shortly after he passed away. He had not looked for so prompt a death, for the evening before, when I brought him a nosegay of violets, he smelt them with delight, and saying that their perfume recalled his birthplace to him, he told me he meant to go there when he was better. The next morning the agony began; with no thought but of him, we assembled round his bed to console him and support him by our prayers. Absorbed in this misfortune, overwhelmed by such a loss, everything else was forgotten, and all precautions were neglected. Suddenly my father saw a little boy who had walked straight into the house without finding any one to stop him, and who carried a letter from the Lyons Municipality to M. Guichard. "He is dying," said my father. "You must take the letter to the Municipality of the suburb." Shortly after the boy reappeared. "There was only one member there," he explained; "and when he opened the letter and looked at it, he said, 'This does not concern me, you must carry it again to M. Guichard's house, and tell them there that they *must* take it in.'" My father opened and read it; it was another order for his arrest. A receipt was hurriedly written and given to the lad, who went away with it. We never knew who it was that had so generously warned us of this new danger, and given us the time to escape from it; but we had often to thank Providence for placing on our path so many kind hearts, so many faithful and vigilant friends.

After M. Guichard's death we still stayed where we were, his widow making us cordially welcome. Indeed, we could not have been so well off anywhere

else; we had a safe asylum, we were with good friends, and we could hope for nothing better. The other persons who had taken refuge along with us had left, and we were now the only strangers in the house; several domiciliary visits were made with the purpose of arresting my father, but he always contrived to remain undiscovered, and the delight of evading the danger so successfully bred in us a sort of foolhardy security. He nearly fell a victim to this, as a matter of fact. The large garden adjoining the house was surrounded by walls and natural rocks, and was only overlooked by the neighbours in one part; my father thought that if he avoided this, he was sufficiently prudent, and went freely into the other parts to enjoy the air. I, in my anxiety for him, murmured at such a risk, but in vain. At last it happened that a Commissary who was in search of him came in by the garden gate, and found himself actually face to face with my father, who was much taken aback. The Commissary read the order for his arrest; but before he could do anything else, Madame Guichard, who had kept all her presence of mind, desired them both to follow her into the house. Once there she opened a secretary-table, and said to the man, "You are the father of a family, Citizen; save this gentleman, who is a father also. Take this money; you are alone, no one else has seen him, and you may be sure *we* shall keep the secret." He allowed himself to be persuaded, and went away. We resolved that my father should henceforward only go into the garden after nightfall; but I only obtained such a promise from him by repeated prayers and supplications.

Thus we passed our days in constant alarms, and in the midst of a bitter persecution. Fortunately my father was supported and consoled by many faithful friends; but grateful as he was, the life was odious to him, and he felt such restraint as a never-ending irritation. A beautiful garden lay before his eyes, and he dared not enter it; it was a very cup of Tantalus. . . .

Deprived of proper exercise, the natural vehemence of his character increased with every successive day of confinement and enforced leisure; his temper was soured, and he cried out, full of bitterness and impatience, for either liberty or death. How often he declared to me, "I would rather die than live like this; if I am taken, if I am guillotined, at least there would be an end to it all; but I cannot bear this life, I had rather die!"

"And me, father, me—what is to become of me?" I would cry.

Had it not been for the action taken against my father by the authorities of the town of Moulins, we should have shared in the liberty now finally rendered to the Lyonnais fugitives, whose names had been struck out of the list of *emigrés*. But on the contrary he was pursued with unabating fury, he was chased from every shelter, he was alone in a situation that was almost intolerable; and the bitterness that filled his heart gave him a disgust for life that led him constantly into committing imprudences. He seemed no longer able to bear anxiety and suspense. "I had rather die!" he repeated constantly; and I as constantly answered, through my tears, "But me, father, what would become of me?"

But what trouble I had to calm him, how difficult it was to inspire him with a little resignation and hope! No sooner had I succeeded than the first fresh cause of irritation destroyed all my work. At last, unable to resist longer, he cried, "I had rather die than live like this." He went out into the garden; spies had been set to watch for him, and he was seen.

M. Guichard's successor, a thoroughgoing and very jealous Jacobin, gave immediate orders that my father was to be arrested; for, to his great regret but very luckily for us, he was obliged to start on the instant on some important business, and could not attend to the matter himself. The Commissary who was left in charge of the affair was a worthy man, and went

straight to a lady whom we knew; to her he explained what had happened, and begged her to warn us. "I am sure he is there," he added; "tell them either to send him away, or to let me know where he is hidden, so that I may avoid finding him." After carefully settling the time at which he would make his visit, he went away. As soon as we received this warning, we took all possible precautions in hiding my father as safely as possible, and we were waiting for the dangerous moment with our hearts beating fast, when suddenly there was a loud ring at the door. A man enveloped in a great cloak asked for my father. Our good Jeanne-Marie replied that he was not there, but the man insisted. "You need not be afraid," he added, "I am a friend of his, my name is Rostaing;[1] go and tell him that I am here." Before he had finished speaking the door had opened and was already closed behind him.

M. de Rostaing had just returned from a long voyage, and learning of the persecution carried to such an extreme against my father, he came to offer him his help. When he learned the state of affairs, he urged my father to go away at once. "Come with me," he said, "leave this house, where your presence is either known or suspected."

"What! in daylight?"

"God will protect us; and at the worst anything would be better than such an existence."

Once resolved on, the plan had to be carried out without delay. Jeanne-Marie ran to fetch a trustworthy boatwoman, who brought her boat to the end of a lane that opened opposite the house door; watching for a moment when no one was passing, my father, wrapped like his friend in a big cloak, crossed the street with him, got into the boat, and they were off. They crossed the Saône, and were soon in safety. We suffered greatly from suspense and uncertainty, but

[1] This officer had served during the siege. He was as well known for his courage and military skill as for his good heart and generous character.

trusted for the best; and when the Commissary arrived at the stated time, scarcely daring to lift his eyes lest he should see more than he desired, we might have told him that the bird was flown. However, we did not, for it was as well that they should continue to think my father was in the house.

M. de Rostaing took him to his own house, kept him there some time, and then found him a new and safer refuge. My father greatly enjoyed the society of his friend, who was like himself an old soldier; they had many memories in common, and almost forgot the sufferings of the present in fighting over again the battles of the past.

My father's process proving very long and slow, he decided that, as he could not keep me with him, I should return to Écherolles to attend, in his absence, to his affairs. Indeed our separation was necessary also for economical reasons. Thus I returned home to find all as I had left it; but this time, at least, I was lodged in the room that had been my mother's, and I was firmly resolved not to give it up to any one else.

CHAPTER XVIII

My sister's death—Mme. Grimauld—Reaction in favour of the *emigrés*—My father and brothers return to Lyons—I rejoin them—The 18th Fructidor—My father again proscribed—My return to Écherolles—I may no longer stay there—I go to Lurcy and Ombre—And to Battouée—My cousin shelters priests and others who are proscribed—Scenes of our daily life.

I HAVE said in the preceding chapter that my father, being unable to keep me longer with him, decided to send me to Écherolles to attend to some of his affairs, and by my presence to recall his existence to many who were only anxious to forget it. I found our tenants at the zenith of their fortunes; they had adapted their style of living to their new circumstances, and had surrounded themselves with many luxuries, but their enjoyment was spoilt by the consciousness of the insecurity of riches dependent wholly on speculation.[1] Another anxiety, moreover, was now disturbing them, for a band of thieves was devastating the district, and its attacks were particularly directed against these "*Nouveaux-riches.*" While I, perhaps alone in all the château, slept soundly and in peace, Monsieur Alix and his family knew no repose; but they no longer spent the hours of the night in drinking and singing merry ditties as before. They had to provide for their own safety, arrange their means of defence; they trembled at the slightest sound, and were terrified lest they should share the fate of neighbours who had been assassinated. . . . All these anxieties and fears spread a

[1] These fortunes melted in their hands; the day came when they were poorer than ever, and far more miserable.

very dark shade over the sun of their prosperity, and, whether it were indeed true or merely set on foot through jealousy of his good fortune and a desire to trouble it, the rumour was current that Alix's name was next on the fatal list. Thenceforward there was no more sleep for him.

My sister was still alive, but her existence was nearing its end. From day to day she grew weaker and weaker, and at last she died, utterly worn out, at twenty years old. The mercury taken by her nurse while suckling her had destroyed her vital force and enfeebled her reason ; it was a terrible example of the dangers to which a mother exposes her child when she gives it up thus to another. My mother never got over it ; till the day of her death she reproached herself most bitterly. Yet she had made very careful inquiries about this nurse before engaging her, and she had only been deceived in the end by a woman who was clever enough to deceive every one.[1]

Odille's short life was one long continuance of suffering ; strong and comely when she was born, little by little she lost both strength and good looks, and nothing was left her but the consciousness of pain. I thought her happy in having come to the end of such an existence ; nevertheless, though she had never been able to return my affection, I sorely felt her loss, which left me so lonely. There was a new blank in my life, and death, another death, among those that I loved. . . . I felt as if I could not bear the solitude which the want of her made about me.

I went to stay for a time with Madame Grimauld, whose society I found so sweet and so consoling. She was living at Lurcy, an estate that she had bought in the Nivernais with the remains of the fine fortune that her husband had squandered ; he had been a very handsome man and was well known for the irregularities of his life. His wife, when quite young, had

[1] My mother's delicate health prevented her from nursing her own children.

married him through inclination, and was happy for barely one day! The rest of her life was made miserable, not only by the licentious conduct and the extravagant habits of her husband, but also by his difficult temper, a spirit of contradiction and irony that I never saw to such a degree in any other person, and that was only surpassed by Madame Grimauld's patience in putting up with this constant and torturing irritation. No complaint ever escaped from her lips; her most intimate friend never learnt from her the existence of her sorrows. She died, as she had lived, in silence.

The sight of suffering such as this was a revelation to me. Buffeted about by the storms that swept over France, I had, like so many others, been wholly absorbed in the great catastrophes that continually overwhelmed us, and of which I could judge and had some right to speak; but such unhappiness as this was new to me, I had no experience of a pain so familiar and so silent that it broke the heart in which it hid itself and undermined the very sources of life. I found myself looking on at a commonplace, even trivial, existence that was a serene and unmurmuring martyrdom.

After having visited my cousins at Moulins I returned to Écherolles, there to await my father's orders. Some time had gone by; he had now gained his case against the town of Moulins, and was free to take up his residence without further interference in the suburb of Vaise. He then sent for me, and I travelled thither in the company of Babet.

The Government was daily showing itself more tolerant, and many *emigrés* ventured to return to French soil; several had come to Lyons, where they were received with cordial kindness, and among them was my elder brother,[1] who, following the general

[1] My elder brother, after his regiment had been disbanded, had gone to Holland, where he had supported himself by teaching French. From Amsterdam he had passed to Hamburg, whence he had returned to us.

example, had risked much in order to rejoin us. Some of the new-comers had obtained that their names should be provisionally removed from the official list of *emigrés*, others hoped for as much; but many, in their imperious desire to return to their own country, had taken no means to protect themselves under its laws. They were full of hope and confidence, looking forward to being reunited to their families and dreaming already of the peace and security of their own firesides; a little too ready, perhaps, to talk freely of the trials and vicissitudes of their exile, and voluble in recounting all they had seen and suffered. There was a fellowship in misfortune between them, and there came to be a like fellowship of over-hopefulness that painted the future in gay colours and promised happiness and prosperity to all; even the wiser and less sanguine were carried away by the tide and learnt to share in these fair illusions.

My younger brother who, thanks to our good friend M. de Guériot, had regained his appointment in the artillery, was stationed at Grenoble, and was able to visit us from time to time. Thus, after having been scattered for so long, we once more met in a family circle, and my father's joy in gathering his children round him was increased by his expectation of recovering possession of his fortune. We were so full of hope that we almost forgot what anxiety was! I was extraordinarily happy in this unfamiliar ease of mind, in this life that was so new to me and so delightful, and that came to such a terrible end, for in barely three months another reaction swept away our dear illusions, destroyed our hopes, and completed our ruin. The 18th Fructidor! . . . All that I know of that sad day was that it condemned us once more to flight, that it tore me from the arms of my dear father, and drove me out into that lonely, wandering, unprotected life which was the hardest to bear of all my sorrows!

All *emigrés* whose names were not definitively struck

out of the official list were ordered to quit French territory where their presence had been tolerated, and passports were delivered to them for the frontier nearest the place where they happened to be when this new revolutionary decree was promulgated. My father and elder brother obtained theirs for Switzerland. As for me, although I was inscribed on the list of *emigrés*, it was so well known that I had never quitted France that my father flattered himself that I was not affected by the measure, and it was therefore decided that I should return to our home, in the vain hope that my presence there might save some remnants of a fortune that was destined to be hopelessly lost. Our preparations were prompt, for we were given little time. As soon as places could be secured in the diligence my father sent me off accompanied by my faithful Babet, and I thus left Lyons only a few hours before he did. My younger brother, I believe, escaped this new proscription by means of the borrowed name under which he passed in his corps, and still more by the generous protection of M. de Guériot.

The diligences were insufficient to carry the number of persons who were leaving Lyons, for it was not only the *emigrés* who were taking flight; their parents, their friends, all who had ventured out of hiding, were now hastening back into their retreats. Nor, as a matter of fact, did all the *emigrés* themselves cross the frontier; for having once returned to their native land, exile seemed doubly bitter. In spite of the decree many remained at home.

The diligence started. . . . Farewell, father; farewell my hopes and my pleasures so quickly lost, my happy days gone for ever . . . farewell, father, brothers.

This sudden change was like a dream, from which at any moment we may awake. Except Babet, I saw round me only sad-faced men, each of whom no doubt was mourning the loss of relatives, friends, and

illusions; but we all wrapped ourselves in a watchful silence, fearful of speaking till we had learnt the political opinions of our fellow-travellers. We gave ourselves up to our own thoughts and soon were absorbed in them. For my own part I quite forgot where I was, in meditating over the extraordinary vicissitudes of our life, and I was only aroused by the pleasantries of a worthy old man, whose frank contagious gaiety stirred us out of the melancholy absorption into which we had fallen. Gradually we started a conversation in which we could reciprocally feel our way; and before long, without making any confidences, we knew enough to lay aside distrust. We all wore the same livery; if we guessed it at first, we were assured of it by the constraint which seized upon us at the arrival of another passenger, smelling of a Jacobin at a mile off, who joined us some stations beyond Lyons. The diligences of those days were very different from those we have now, and were neither fast nor comfortable; they made a very short run in the day and stopped twice for meals, without counting breakfast before starting. It was a good time for the innkeepers; for it had not yet occurred to any one to go without dinner in order the better to enjoy supper on one's arrival at night after twelve or fifteen hours on the road. Regularly at midday the voice of mine host sounded in one's ears with the imperious invitation, "The soup is served!" and at eight o'clock, as regularly came the announcement again. . . . The exactitude of all concerned was truly admirable; and unless a rare accident interfered with its steady pace, the coach could be counted on to arrive to the minute. It was seldom that a traveller, even if he had no appetite, ventured to resist that pressing invitation, "The soup is served."

Thus at the first pause for dinner we were received by the innkeeper with his irresistible argument, namely, the soup-tureen; he placed it on the table with a flourish, uttering as he did so the appropriate

phrase. But as soon as we had time to look about us, we perceived that one of our fellow-travellers was missing, a fine-looking young man with a fresh and pleasant face and polished manners. "Was he taken ill?" He could not be found. . . . When we started again, the diligence presently overtook him on the highway, striding along at a great pace; and in the evening he reassured us as to the state of his health by supping heartily. Next day, however, at dinner-time he disappeared again; and many no doubt thought as I did, that he was obliged to content himself with a crust of bread and some pure water, if indeed pure it were. . . . Poor young fellow! It is only in romances that such fare is tolerable! . . . "Permit me," said the kindly old man of whom I have spoken, rising in his place, and lifting his hat as if in respect for tribulation and poverty, "to make a suggestion; we have amongst us one who is probably suffering from misfortune,—will you authorise me to invite him to share a meal which we cannot enjoy if he is to be deprived of it? . . ." He had not to wait for our answer. Nevertheless, though he went out at once, he did not succeed in finding the young man. "He has gone on," said the driver, "we shall overtake him on the road." Two gentlemen who were travelling in the same direction as he was (to Auvergne) declared that they would see to it that he should not so escape again. . . . Presently he got in and took his usual place among us. I had not eaten much at dinner-time but had laid in some provisions; these I now handed round, laughing and making light of my caprice, and pressing them on the company. I was met, however, with refusals, and even he, who had not dined at all, would accept nothing. That evening we arrived at Roanne; I watched him eat a hearty supper, and then I took leave of my fellow-travellers, feeling almost sad to think that I should see none of them again, but satisfied to remember that the young man would have a good dinner next day.

I had engaged a private carriage to take me to Écherolles. At daybreak, just as I was ready to start, the hostess of the inn entered my room; "There is one here, Madame," she said, "who is very unfortunate, and I have come to ask if you will help him."

"That poor young fellow! I was sure of it when he would take no dinner!"

"No, Madame, not a young man but an old one."

"What, he who was the first to be concerned about the other? But he was so cheerful, so gay!"

"He is a priest," she replied, "forced to leave Lyons and with no idea where to go. He has nothing, absolutely nothing. . . . In his distress last night he told me all; he does not know what to do, for he has no money to carry him further. I think I can find him a safe refuge where he can wait for better times; and some of those who travelled with him have given me what they could spare to help him. I ventured to ask, for they seemed to me kind-hearted." Ah! I thought, he had guessed the other's misery because he knew his own. Perhaps the one we had pitied was not after all the most unfortunate!

The next day I arrived at Écherolles, but barely had I crossed the threshold and greeted my nurse, than I was secretly warned by the mayor to leave at once, as, my name being on the list of *emigrés*, I was included in a decree that admitted of no exception. He implored me to spare him the pain of being forced to put it into execution by having me transported, from brigade to brigade, out of republican territory. Oh, why had I quitted my father! . . . Once more I embraced my faithful nurse, and leaving Babet with her I went away, alone, in a spring cart driven by Vernière, the gardener. This was my last farewell to the home of my fathers.

I went in the first place to Madame Grimauld, at Lurcy. I thought that I could do so without danger either to her or to myself, as this estate was in another department from Écherolles, and I had frequently

been seen there before; but though her welcome was, as always, cordial and affectionate, and though Josephine received me as a sister, I saw at once that M. Grimauld was not pleased with my company. I could scarcely blame him for this, as I was now a "suspect"; and although I had never breathed any air save that of France, the fact of my name being inscribed on the list of *emigrés* rendered me a dangerous personage, whose presence was very compromising to any who gave me shelter. I was proscribed, and this gave me a pestiferous little air of importance from which all fled in terror; as, at the Leghorn lazaretto, the leper is kept at a distance lest his breath or the touch of his garments should spread contagion where he passes.

The truth was that things were now very uncertain, and the Terror was only too ready to reawaken. Its adherents had returned to power, alarming rumours were being circulated, and a projected law was, even in advance, making the bravest tremble. This proposed law was one that decreed the deportation of all relatives of *emigrés;* and had it been carried out, it would have given an immense latitude to our persecutors. This law was the Terror itself; and at the mere thought of it, we all saw ourselves in imagination traversing France from brigade to brigade, thrust out at last to carry our miseries elsewhere, perhaps even across the seas. It was not then known whether we should be free to choose the place of our exile; and I confess that, in spite of the resignation I had gained in having come through so many sufferings, and in having lost so much that the future could find little more to take from me, I would have found it hard indeed to be sent to America instead of being allowed to rejoin my father in Switzerland. But this law, with which we were menaced, was never passed; we got off with a fright and a painful period of conjecture and dread.

As I quite understood the inconvenience of my

presence, I at once announced at Lurcy that it was my intention to return to Mademoiselle Melon. I wrote to her, in fact, without delay, to ask her if she would receive me, and to beg her in that case to send to fetch me to Ombre; I knew that I could remain a few days at Lurcy without danger to any one, as its distance from any main roads served as a protection from untoward visits. I do not think that my kind friend, had she been alone, would have consented to let me leave her; and even M. Grimauld, once satisfied that I had no intention of making a long stay in his house, had no objection to my presence there in the meantime. Moreover, he was on the point of starting for Nevers, where he was to see some house, and visit a small estate which he was proposing to take in exchange for Lurcy. This little property, which I have since seen for myself, was nothing more imposing than a pretty house set in the midst of a fine garden. He declared that he would gain enormously by the exchange; but it was by this sort of "gaining" that he had squandered an income of thirty thousand francs (£1200 a year), and was leading his wife and daughter into complete ruin. Madame Grimauld raised no opposition, she did not feel strong enough. . . . I was left alone with her, for Josephine had gone with her father.

One day when we had just finished dinner, a gentleman was announced, who declined to give his name, but asked to see Madame Grimauld. She went forward at once to speak to the stranger, who explained in a low voice that he had hoped to see her husband whom he knew well, and whose absence he much regretted. He stated that his name was Lebrun, and seemed to expect to be offered hospitality. Madame Grimauld, however, was in no hurry to do this, and scrutinised him with some suspicion; she remained cold and distant even when at last she invited him to sit down, and on hearing that he had not dined, gave orders that he should be served. He ate much, spoke humbly, men-

tioned where he had seen M. Grimauld, added details, anecdotes, corroborations; my friend still preserved her chilly manner and her evident doubts. He said that he was an *emigré*, without home or refuge, denuded of all, and obliged to ask help from the charitable; an *emigré! my* heart at least spoke for him; perhaps my father and my brothers were at that same moment forced to beg for the same assistance.

He wore an overcoat of light blue, slightly worn; his manner of speech was humble and suppliant. He recounted all his misfortunes, all the dangers to which he had been exposed; but to my astonishment, Madame Grimauld listened to him unmoved. She showed none of her usual benevolence, she seemed to me almost unkind; and the stranger, no doubt impressed as I was, rose to take leave of her. At this moment he asked the route by which M. Grimauld would return; she mentioned the opposite direction to that by which she expected her husband. I was waiting for the stranger at the door, and putting into his hand two crowns of six francs, I said, without looking at him, lest he should feel humiliated, "Pray, Monsieur, accept the half of what I have left; I have only a louis!" He bowed profoundly, and took his leave. I returned to the salon, very pleased with myself, and ventured to ask Madame Grimauld why she had displayed such scant hospitality.

"That man," she answered, "is not what he pretends to be; an *emigré* would not venture to show himself in an overcoat of the colour worn in Condé's army. He is neatly dressed, his stockings are carefully mended, his linen is clean; he has not the appearance of a man in flight or hiding. He calls himself an *emigré*, but he looks to me more like a spy who is profiting by our misfortunes to make a livelihood out of us. That is why I was careful not to tell him the road by which my husband would return."[1]

Shortly after this I was once more established in the

[1] I think now that he only inquired so as to avoid M. Grimauld.

"nieces' room" at Ombre, having been heartily welcomed by my aunt. I have already described her style of living, and need say no more about it now; but one great change had taken place during my absence, for the tolerance of the Government had allowed the churches to be reopened and served by those priests who had taken the oath. This permission once granted, had not been again withdrawn. Thus the *curé* of the parish of Ombre now said Mass in public on Sundays and festivals. I profited by my aunt's graciousness to beg her to excuse me from attending these services, as neither my father nor I approved of the priests who had refused obedience to Rome. She assured me that I was perfectly free to do as I thought right, as she held that every one ought to follow the voice of their own conscience. This point settled, I made myself at home, and was almost happy under my aunt's protection, while she treated me with a kindness for which I shall always be deeply grateful. She even allowed me to make some visits amongst my relations in the neighbourhood, as it had occurred to no one in this quiet and retired country-side to consider me dangerous.[1] Thus I spent some time with M. Leblanc de Lespinasse, who lived on his estate of Battouée,[2] near the village of *la Charité*. His eldest daughter had died, but she had transmitted to her younger sister her affection for me. I have always looked on my life with this excellent and pious family as one of the blessings bestowed on me by Providence.

This house was a real home of peace; the patriarchal virtues were there exercised simply, and as a matter of course. The father and daughter, both most deeply and sincerely religious, never dreamt that they could be otherwise, or thought of considering it a merit. I

[1] Having already been under surveillance by the local municipality, no one dreamt that my name was on the list of *emigrés*, which it is quite possible they never read.

[2] Now called the Battoir, in the commune of Champvoux.

never saw anywhere else such a constant practice of goodness united to so large an indulgence for all who did not think as they did; for they had learnt to hope and pray, and to wait in silence for the return of the prodigal.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, pious and devoted in heart as a Sister of Charity, resembled one also in appearance; for the retirement in which she lived, and her carelessness of fashion, led her to adopt a costume that was almost conventual in its simplicity. It suited her so well that it passed unobserved, and in fact it would have been difficult to imagine her otherwise attired. When she was not busy managing her father's house, she gave up her leisure to tending the unfortunate; her equable spirit never betrayed her sorrows, her fear, or her suffering, and if circumstances led her to speak of them, it was with perfect serenity and sweetness. No afflictions were able to overwhelm her; her soul, upheld from above, suffered perhaps, but never gave way. Her life was like a clear brook running noiselessly between the flowers and thorns upon its banks; she was humbly convinced of her own unworthiness, and only perceived her own faults and the virtues of others.[1]

I was fortunate enough to return more than once to this hospitable dwelling, where I was always welcomed with the frank affection that makes one at once a member of the family; but if I continue to express my gratitude for all they did for me, I shall only increase my cousin's vexation and alarm her humility. Her father had spent some time in prison, but after Robespierre's death he regained his liberty and came back to his life in the country. His benevolence and his hospitality made the way to his house familiar to all who were unfortunate; and Nevers was full of such,

[1] In speaking of the many virtues of my relatives and friends, in recounting the great kindness with which they treated me, I may offend their modesty; let them forgive me! I have no means but this of expressing my gratitude, and I only regret that I cannot name them each and all. I, at least, have forgotten none!

proscribed by all the rigour of the laws. A great number of priests who had refused to take the oath had nevertheless been unwilling to abandon their flocks, and during the Terror had remained hidden in secret hiding-places whence they came out only at night to visit the sick and dying. Some of them, surprised in the exercise of their apostolic functions, others, betrayed by unfaithful friends, paid for their devotion with their lives; but God, in His goodness, preserved many to us for our guidance and our consolation.

It was a hard life that these worthy men were forced to lead; shut into narrow hiding-places, unable to move and often deprived of air and light, they too often succumbed to their sufferings. At Battouée, on the other hand, they were not only welcomed with joy and compassion, but they could come in turn to find a safe refuge and breathe a fresh and pure air after their long seclusion. They arrived, as they went away, during the night. Their presence was a secret to most of the servants, and as the house was not large, this necessitated a constant watchfulness that was interesting and even enjoyable, for we usually enjoy new sensations, and the continual alarms amidst which we lived made the hours fly. We had to be always as it were on guard, foreseeing and expecting everything, never to be taken by surprise, above all never to lose our presence of mind. My cousin indeed watched like a mother over those whom she looked upon as her charges; and the least sound was sufficient to warn her of danger.[1] When we had escaped

[1] The Abbé Laurent, one of the priests who took refuge at Battouée, fell ill while there. This was very embarrassing—a proscribed man owed it to his protectors to keep in good health!—and but for my cousin's prudence and foresight might have proved a great danger for her father. Aided by a faithful man-servant, the only one among the domestics who knew of the abbé's presence, she nursed and tended him as if she were indeed a Sister of Charity; and she arranged with a doctor, who was a friend of the family and thus could visit the house without attracting notice, to attend her patient. The illness, however, which caused them so great an anxiety, presently ended in death. Mdlle. de Lespinasse, who had partly

some peril, our success repaid us amply for all our alarms; we were still able to laugh at those whom we had outwitted, and, stimulated by victory, we prepared gaily for a new passage of arms. Ah, it was, I say it with conviction, a fine time, a happy time, full of delight and joy. How beautiful a thing life was, in the midst of so much interest and activity; how great a happiness when I, whom they loved and protected, could make myself useful and in my turn protect those who were more unfortunate than I! On looking back, I think of those days with gratitude and tenderness.

We rose very early in the morning, in order to hear Mass in the small chapel that opened off the *salon*. My cousin had accustomed the household to seeing her go in and out of it at all hours, so that it was at no time an astonishment to them to see it lit up, for it was her habit to pass much of her time there, and part of every night in prayer. Thus we could use the chapel early or late without awakening suspicion or appearing to do anything unusual; I have, for instance, seen children baptized there, and have been present at a marriage. We met, as we separated, noiselessly and with every precaution.

The danger attached to these secret services only increased their solemnity. Kneeling in silence upon the stone floor, our prayers seemed to rise as if on

hidden the danger from her father in order to spare him needless alarm, went into his room one morning and tranquilly announced that the Abbé Laurent was just dead; which news, though he was not altogether unprepared for it, set him into a great dismay and consternation. A secret death, the presence of a dead body in his house! . . . It exposed him to all the rigours of the law; the poor priest was a greater danger to them now that he was dead than he had been while yet alive. But his daughter consoled him. "Don't be afraid," she said, "I have arranged what to do, and with God's help this shall be hidden in the deepest secrecy. Don't be afraid, father." . . . In order to let no other person share in the matter, she had the body simply wrapped up by the servant who had helped in the nursing; together they laid it in a hole dug in the corner of an old barn where at that time wood was stored, and when it was filled in, they piled on the top of it a great heap of logs and kindling. She took care to send word to all his fellow-priests; and I may say here that when later on it became possible, the clergy came in great pomp to take up the bones of the good abbé, and to transport them to consecrated ground.

wings of light; the priest's voice, hushed for the sake of prudence, stole the more tenderly into our hearts, bearing with it a divine conviction and consolation. . . . In such mysterious and nocturnal meetings we were led to remember the persecutions of the early Christians, and the memory only fanned our zeal. I remember that once a relative of the family came to pay a visit at Battouée. He was a great man of the day,[1] a strong partisan of the Government, and it was not known how far he might be trusted; so, after discussion, it was settled that Mass should be said earlier than usual. Scarcely had it begun at four o'clock in the morning than we heard our gentleman striding up and down the *salon* adjoining the chapel. My cousin quietly approached the priest and said to him softly, "Monsieur l'Abbé, speak lower, you will be overheard, you must speak lower." . . . But M. l'Abbé, being deaf, went on without paying any attention, quite undisturbed; while in the other room the stranger also continued his walk, hearing or choosing to hear nothing, and never touching the door that he might so easily at any moment have opened. . . . Ah, how much I could write of the continual emotions that filled our days, and that sometimes, in the midst of our anxieties, provided us with hearty amusement.

One day when, to distract our poor deaf priest, we were playing *reversis*, the party being composed of the abbé, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, a relative who lived in the house, and myself, a faithful servant came hurriedly to warn us that a lady of the neighbourhood was arriving on foot and from an unexpected direction, and that she was, in fact, close on his heels. "Inquisitive creature!" cried my cousin, "she hopes to take us by surprise. Quick, quick, M. l'Abbé, you must get up!"

[1] General de Lespinasse, who amongst other campaigns was in command of the artillery at the siege of Toulon, where he had Bonaparte under his orders. He became a senator and Minister of the Interior under the Empire.

"Eh? What is the matter?" he said.

"Hush, ask no questions just now, but come away quickly."

"Aha, I understand," he shouted in his great voice, "some one is coming;" and pushing back his chair noisily, and walking with all his might, he had barely the time to disappear—boisterously—by one door before the other opened. "Hide the basket of counters and let us go on; she will not notice that there are four colours," was whispered; and as we rose to welcome the visitor, we took care to upset the basket and mix the cards, which were presently removed to make room for the usual refreshments.

Such surprises happened to us daily, as can well be conceived. Sometimes the visitors invited themselves to dinner, in which case our proscribed friends had to remain in their own rooms, without venturing to make a movement, as these rooms were supposed to be uninhabited, and any sound therein might arouse suspicion. We ourselves carried them their dinner; but it was only with great care and no small audacity that we could escape meeting on our way some of the strangers who, in the liberty of country habits, moved freely about the house. Perhaps our prisoners, who enjoyed their liberty at Battouée all the more that they were deprived of it elsewhere, murmured at even such a short confinement, and longed to escape into the wood, where they could move and breathe without fear of being overheard; immediately the affair was contrived, the master of the house started a hand at cards, and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse carried out the rest. A door was closed, for a moment only; the way was open, our prisoners gained the woods, and stayed there hidden in a thicket till a signal warned them that the unwelcome visitors had taken their departure. Once the carriages had driven off, I shut my little dog safely into my room, and ran out into the shrubberies, calling her loudly by her name; at the sound of my voice, our good old priests knew they

might venture to leave their hiding-places. The droll part of the matter was that my dog's name was Coquette, and we often laughed to think of the grave and reverend figures that answered to this absurd name! A thousand little incidents, indeed, moved us to laughter, I the first, for it was in my nature to laugh much and easily; and all this youthful merriment, stifled by so many tears, seemed to burst out of me in spite of myself, choking me when I attempted to check it, and often setting our old *abbés* a-laughing in concert. Gaiety is generally contagious when it is hearty, and there is no doubt that it was very good for all of us.

One evening it happened that a priest arrived who was so short-sighted that he could scarcely see to walk safely. He had been left at the gate of Battouée by his guide, and only asked for some supper, as he intended to go on immediately afterwards to the place where he was expected. "But what am I to do?" he said; "I see little by daylight, but by night I see nothing at all, and I do not know the cross-roads. If I were once on the highway I could manage, as I should only have to walk straight on."

"He will take every bush for a man," my cousin whispered to me, "and will tumble over every mole-hill that lies in his way. I have no safe guide to give him; Alexandrine, are you afraid to go with me if I take him as far as the highway? It is not more than three kilomètres."

"Certainly I will go," I cried; "I am quite ready."

"When we start I shall tell the gardener to follow us," she added, "so that we shall not be altogether alone. But I will not tell him in advance, for though he is a worthy man, he is weak-minded and talkative."

It was an exceedingly dark night when we set out. As we passed by the cottage of Javelle the gardener, we called him, and he followed us without having any suspicion of our enterprise; but when he saw that we

were going some distance, he was first astonished and then frightened, for he was not exactly courageous. "At least, Mademoiselle," he declared, "if you had warned me I should have armed myself."

"We are in no danger, Javelle."

"But indeed, Mademoiselle, we might meet men, or even dogs, and I have not so much as a stick." He gave himself up to gloomy imaginations, from which he only recovered when he observed my white dress. "Ah, now, Mademoiselle, I am not afraid any longer; for if we meet any one they will take you for a ghost, and will certainly run away as fast as they can."

"So much the better, Javelle," I replied, laughing; "I will tell them that I have come from purgatory to tell them to repent of their sins."

We reached the highway without any difficulty, and returned as safely, after having started our worthy man on the right road.

Sometimes we accompanied one of our good priests when he carried the Viaticum to a sick person, repeating in a low tone as we followed him, litanies to the saints and fervent prayers. The woods hid us in their shadows, the green vaults overhead shut us into silence; there was no echo to betray our words, no unfriendly ear to overhear us. The Holy of Holies, escorted only by children and feeble women, peacefully traversed the still and lonely ways to carry consolation and pardon to the unfortunate.

CHAPTER XIX

Mme. de Bézé and her kindness—Death of Mme. Grimauld—Life in those days—Mdlle. Melon's affection for me—Intrigues of those whom this affection displeased—Melancholy result—I am forced to leave—I go to Josephine Grimauld at Nevers—I find her ill—She dies soon after—At Battouée once more—Law of hostage—The situation improves—I see my brother again—My request to return to Moulins is acceded to.

I LEFT Battouée only to find the same welcome at M. de Chaligny's.[1] My relatives indeed seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to make up to me for the privations I had suffered by their tender and benevolent affection; and I shall never forget the delicacy and sympathy with which Madame de Bézé, his daughter, lifted the veil which hid my private distresses, and discovering that I was denuded even of the barest necessaries, shared with me all that she herself possessed. She was verily a sister to me; I cannot describe the extent of her kindness, nor the happiness of the days I spent with her at Mont,[2] whither she had retired with her father and younger brother Frederick when, after the Terror, the opening prisons had made them free to return to the pure air of their own mountains. They had found the house ransacked and everything in the shape of furniture carried off: in fact, an empty

[1] I have already mentioned M. de Chaligny, my cousin and Mdlle. Melon's nephew. He, with his daughter and younger son, had been imprisoned; the elder son was an *emigré*.

[2] Mont was situated near Moulins-Engilbert in the Morvan (department of Nièvre), a very hilly country. The house itself was small; in the garden there was a pretty piece of water surrounded by poplars, from the banks of which there was a fine view. The kindness I received at Mont makes it a pleasure to remember every detail about the place.

trough turned bottom uppermost had to serve them as both table and chairs for their first meal. It was the only object that had been disdained by those who had helped themselves to everything else.

It is a pleasure to me now to linger in thought over those times when, poor as I was in everything else, I was rich in devoted friends. There was then a charm in the relations existing between all families of noble birth, which afterwards disappeared; for as they gradually recovered their former position and wealth, many of them as gradually lost the great and admirable qualities which had been learnt in a common misery, in the midst of suffering and privation that had made them all equal. Yesterday in irons, to-day free, they shared with their companions in misfortune this happiness as they had shared that distress, and the friends who had borne the brunt of the storm with them were still their friends in the fair days that followed. Every house had been devastated, but no one made any complaint, for the joy of being safe and at home blotted out all lesser vexations; and since happiness is a sociable emotion that must be displayed and expressed, every one visited every one else to congratulate and be congratulated. There was no difficulty about putting up one's visitors; if there were too many for the accommodation the young men slept on some straw, and the ladies managed as best they could, all laughing merrily over such little incidents, and rising in the morning as well content as they had lain down at night. The table was spread with the simplest dishes, but the sauce of *liberty* gave them the finest taste in the world; we were too happy in the present to trouble about the future, and it was our delight to share with each other all that we had.

But when the first intoxication of freedom passed, and by force of time, economy, or petitions, people began to regain their former circumstances, this cordiality waned. The differences of title and posi-

tion made themselves felt, and as soon as the pretensions of rank and wealth were revived, the happy intimacy of which I have spoken became impossible. Egotism and ambition were the ruling passions in many hearts, and played a large part in every life, and in the struggle to rise in the world mere affection was trampled underfoot. Thus ended this short and happy epoch, a veritable golden age coming between two centuries of steel.

About this time I had the misfortune to lose my dear friend, Madame Grimauld, who died just as she was leaving Lurcy to go to Nevers. I went at once to keep Josephine company and to share her sorrow; and stayed with her till she left Lurcy, when I returned to Ombre.

After having lived in the midst of so many kind friends, I found the style of life at Ombre very hard; this was indeed the bitterness of exile. There was nothing to distinguish one day from another; there was not even a possibility of conversation, or an interchange of feeling, that might rouse or console either mind or heart. It was an existence wholly animal, full of petty squabbles, of clashing interests, of reciprocal calumnies and ill-will; there were a number of servants, and they saw so little of their mistress that they ceased to respect her. Mademoiselle Melon now rarely left her room, and thus knew nothing of the discussions that troubled the peace of her little empire; or, rather, as she knew of them only through Babet her maid, and as she delivered all her orders by her, she was herself misled and frequently was made to interfere most unjustly. This maid of hers was feared by every one, and, I may say, was as generally hated. For a long time I remained ignorant of the extent of her power, or rather of the use she made of it, as I held myself aloof from all these intrigues and desired to know nothing of them; I was satisfied with possessing my aunt's affection, and in seeing it daily increase and grow more tender. I tried to

make myself worthy of it by doing every service I could for her, and when I left her room, I passed straight to my own, almost without looking round me. I was afraid of perceiving things that would have shocked me, and I only went out to take a solitary walk before returning to my aunt. It was a monotonous existence, but a tranquil one, and I grew used to it. But it did not last long.

The affection that Mademoiselle Melon felt for me displeased two persons; the *curé*, whom I had offended by not attending his services, and Babet, who feared lest my influence should rival her own. Daily my aunt grew colder and less familiar with me; her extraordinary caprices rendered my position very difficult indeed. What was right to-day was wrong to-morrow; if, in a moment of forgetfulness, she welcomed me kindly, a few minutes afterwards I was sent away in anger. My aunt gave me no explanation of this change towards me, which grew constantly more marked; and I was afraid to ask her the reason of it. I contented myself with studying each of my actions, of my words, even of my movements, so as to avoid anything that might displease her; but all was in vain, I could not succeed. Then I, in my ignorance, had recourse to Babet. "You who know my aunt so well," I said, "you who know exactly what pleases or displeases her, help me to find out what she wishes me to do, and how I anger her."

Ah! the intriguing woman was delighted to find a means so easy of destroying an affection that she thought was against her own interests. She abused my confidence, and gave me treacherous advice; when my aunt desired to be alone, Babet sent me to her room, and when she wished to see me I was warned to keep out of sight, so that whatever I did was wrong. I remember that I once remained for a week shut up in my own room, because Mademoiselle Melon had forbidden me to go to hers; while as a matter

of fact Babet was all this time pointing out to her how ungrateful and bad-hearted I must be to refuse to pay her the simple and conventional politeness due to the mistress of the house, who was moreover my aunt and my benefactress! It was only when she thought that she had sufficiently roused my aunt's anger against me, that she hypocritically begged for my forgiveness, and entreated Mademoiselle Melon to bear with my ways. My aunt's good heart was, however, very ready to listen to any excuses, and when she sent for me I went to her at once, so happy to be kindly received that I had not the courage to ask the reason of my past disgrace, and was content to enjoy this deceptive calm till a new storm burst over my head. By repeating this over and over again, Babet succeeded at last in destroying my aunt's affection for me, and in persuading her that my presence was both disagreeable and undesirable, though it was not without many precautions and by slow degrees that she was taught to hate the orphan whom she had so generously protected.[1]

Mademoiselle Melon had given up going to church, but she now began to do so once more, in order to be able to reproach me with my lack of religion. The *curé*, who hoped to overcome my persistent flight from him, spoke to me of the influence that he exercised over my aunt, and endeavoured to shake what he called my philosophy by assuring me that he could induce Mademoiselle Melon to make her will in my favour. "I have no right to expect such a thing," I answered,

[1] Confined to my own room, I had not observed that Babet was often intoxicated. When this was the case, she did not answer my aunt's bell, and Mdlle. Melon, furious at such neglect, would find fault with her as soon as she reappeared. "But, Mademoiselle, I could not come," she replied, "I had no time." "No time, when I ring for you?" "Oh, Mdlle. des Écherolles wanted me; she can do nothing for herself, and when I do not answer your bell it is because she is making me do all sorts of things for her." My aunt was naturally angry with me and showed her ill humour without ever telling me the cause; which, indeed, I never suspected, as I received no service from any one, Babet having, as I heard later, forbidden it.

"she has nearer heirs;" and not choosing to reply further to his insidious remarks, I relapsed into silence.

I had no news of my father. Overwhelmed by my own loneliness, my thoughts were very sombre. What was such an existence to lead to? What would the evening be after such a dark and troubled day? When should I be delivered from the burden of living? For my health was giving way under the weight of my depression, and deprived of companions, of sympathy, of occupation, I was drifting into a resistless apathy. The memory of some charming verses upon the pleasure and joy that belong to youth added yet a touch of bitterness to my melancholy; I had known neither, and I wept for my eighteen years of grief and trial.

In the midst of my wretchedness Providence sent me an unlooked-for consolation, the arrival of my younger brother. I had not known all this time what was become of him; but it seemed that he had contrived to remain in his military service in spite of being inscribed on the list of *emigrés*, probably thanks to being known by another name than his own. He had just returned from Italy, and was now on his way to Brittany; but the distance being great and his pay not very considerable, he was travelling part of the way on foot. The sight of him, and the delight it gave me, seemed to bring me back to life, and even my aunt received him most graciously, so that the week he spent with us passed like a single happy holiday without a cloud or a vexation. How we enjoyed our companionship, and what a consolation it was to tell each other all our thoughts! There was but one secret between us, and that was the state of our respective fortunes; he suspected that I was in want of money, and pretended to be well off to make me accept some of his, while I, fearing lest he should deprive himself of what he needed, did the same. I succeeded generally in avoiding his questions; and as I happened to have a small sum by me, I hid it

carefully in his clothes, so that he should find it only when it was impossible for him to return it to me. But if, for once, I succeeded in my little plan, too often it was my brother who insisted in sharing all he had with me; he seemed to divine what I required, and I fear that more than once he went without what was necessary for himself in order to come to my assistance. I cannot tell how greatly his love and sympathy sweetened and softened the hardness of my life.

For some time after he went away I was consoled by his letters, but at length they traversed the Vendée with great difficulty; he was now at Port Louis, renamed Port Libre, and the *chonans* had seized the roads and intercepted all communications, so that I was once more without news of him. In order to occupy my thoughts I took up the study of Italian, in which I had had some lessons from a kindly priest during my stay at Battouée; but the only book I had in this language was a copy of "Young's Night Thoughts." I read it with ardour, and the beauty of its language and ideas exalted me to a passion of admiration; but in the narrowness and constraint of my surroundings my imagination was excited by such reading to a feverish activity, while my melancholy increased and my body grew daily more feeble. I was almost happy in the belief that I was rapidly approaching my end.

I shall not enter into the details of each day's trials and vexations, nor describe the underhand dealings which led to the final rupture. In fact it was only much later that I knew them myself; and when I did, I felt that much excuse must be made for Mademoiselle Melon, and I regretted bitterly that I had been so quick to resent her hard words. However, I could not have continued to struggle against the woman who even mastered my aunt, and when Mademoiselle Melon expressed to me how disagreeable it was to her to have under her roof a young person whom she did

not like, I understood that there was nothing to be done but to go away, and made up my mind to do so. I did not leave without assuring her that I faithfully preserved in my heart all my gratitude and affection for her, and I ventured to hope that some time in the future I might show her that I had not forgotten all that she had done for me.

My aunt, who knew that I had no private resources, thought that my resolution was but the effect of a passing fit of anger, and seemed surprised and even grieved when I actually took my departure. She told me so, very kindly; but those other words of hers still rankled in my heart, and I would not give up my decision. I begged her pardon for anything I might have done that displeased her, and she was moved by my excuses and wept when I bade her farewell. Afterwards Babet made her write me some very cruel letters; but when I went to present my respects to her some time later, she had returned to her natural kindliness, and received me with affection and cordiality. To have done with this sad affair, I may add that the arrogance of her maid became so great that Mademoiselle Melon, weakened by her extreme age, and unable to throw off the yoke, was obliged to call her nephew, M. de Chaligny, to her aid. He turned out Babet and replaced her by a worthy and respectable person, and my aunt passed the last years of her life in peace and comfort; she learnt then how deeply she had been deceived, and how unjustly I had suffered.

I went to join Josephine Grimauld at Nevers. I had had no news of her for a long time, for she had been unwilling to grieve me with an account of her condition. She could no longer walk; rheumatism had so entirely crippled her that she had been ordered a special treatment for it, but all that she gained was a pair of crutches; and dearly as I would have liked to stay with her and take care of her, I could not linger at Nevers without running the risk of being recognised

as an *emigré*. Thus I was obliged to leave her, and to return to the country; very soon she fell so ill that it was thought her chest was affected, and she wrote to me that she was starting for Paris. I saw her before she went, to say farewell.

Her father, tired of her ill health, was sending her away on the excuse of gaining further advice, for he had no further interest in her since he had succeeded in making her draw up a will in his favour. I had always said to her, "Josephine, for your own sake keep your fortune in your own hands; for if you give up to your father what you possess, you will die destitute." "I shall not have the time to come to that," was her reply. And yet she lived long enough to suffer many cruel privations, and he abandoned her to the care of strangers. She begged him to come to Paris; he was busy with his hay. The doctor wrote to him, "If you wish to see your daughter alive, there is not a moment to lose;" he replied that he would come when he was at leisure. "Do not let yourself mope," he wrote to Josephine; "do not believe what the doctors tell you. Go to the theatre, drink some champagne, and enjoy yourself." This letter arrived too late for her to see it; she had ceased to live.

I have somewhat anticipated in speaking of my friend's death; while she was fading away in Paris, the days were passing rapidly and brought us new storms. The law of hostages, that iniquitous law that even the Terror had not imagined, menaced the safety of every citizen: not one was secure from the most arbitrary accusations. Thus while I was at Battouée (whither I had returned after leaving Nevers) M. de Lespinasse was picked out under this law to serve as hostage along with three other persons, all of importance in the canton, because at some distance from Battouée a woman had been murdered whom neither he nor his companions knew either by sight or name.

The other three gentlemen took flight, well aware of how little innocence counted for in the eyes of their

accusers. My cousin wished her father to follow their example, but he refused. "I will not run away from such an absurdity," he said. "If they insist upon it, I will rather go to prison. I have not forgotten the way thither."

"At least, father," implored Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, "hide yourself, and let me watch over you; I do not ask it for your own sake, but for mine, for my brother's; if you do not value your own life, preserve it for your children." He gave way to her entreaties, and she immediately set about hiding her charges, for as usual there were already some "contraband" persons in the house. An old priest was living there under another name than his own, it is true, but if one were arrested it might lead to recognising the other, and this had to be foreseen.

As soon as there was any question of arresting M. de Lespinasse and his three companions, a friend was to come from Nevers to warn them so that they might be prepared; if the arrest were decided on it would probably be put into execution very suddenly, and it was necessary to be ready. This friend arrived at Battouée in the middle of the night, rousing the household from sleep. I was at first astonished at the noise, but I quickly divined that it was not a question of illness, and did not disturb myself. "I will wait quietly," I thought, "for if they want me they will come to fetch me. In the meanwhile I may as well go to sleep." I had barely finished this little monologue when my cousin opened the door. "You must get up," she said, "we need your room." When she had explained her plans to me, it appeared that I was ill, and in case of a visitation must go to bed. . . . The house meanwhile was prepared as if for a siege; no one was allowed to come in without good reason, and at the least sign of danger every one was to be at his post. Thus we passed three days, but nothing happened; the arrests were not decided on, perhaps, because they were thought premature. After this little alarm we fell

back into our ordinary way of life once more, and I, who had been a moment distracted from my own thoughts by the danger that menaced my cousins, returned to my melancholy and depression. I had still no news either of my father or elder brother. My younger brother having taken part in an unlucky expedition, had been for eight months a prisoner in Edinburgh Castle, and I knew not what to hope for, when suddenly I received a letter from Chambolle himself, telling me that he had been set free, and was now at Paris. A short time after this, while I was staying with M. de Chaligny, a young soldier with his knapsack on his back made his appearance among us; it was Chambolle!

Such moments make up for many sad days. He was cheerful and in good health, and opening his purse triumphantly, he showed me fifty beautiful gold louis in it. I knew that he had come back penniless; that even his pay had been kept from him, and that while he was a prisoner in a foreign land his name had been re-inscribed on the list of *emigrés*. "Where did you get that gold?" I asked, in great astonishment; "is it yours?"

"Indeed it is!"

"You did not get it by robbing the diligence!" (This was very common at the time.[1])

"Fie! No, I won it. Josephine thought I was mad when I put off my departure to wait for the lottery, into which I had put my very last four francs, but I was not so mad after all! I gave her back what she had lent me to come home with, and this is for you."

He did not stay with us long; buckling his knapsack once more on to his shoulders, he set out cheerfully for Grenoble, where our good and faithful friend, M. de Guériot, found him a post about himself.

[1] Many professional thieves stopped the coaches in the name of the king, and seized money that belonged to the Republic: profiting thus by the example set them by the Vendéens, who, as is well known, seized all public moneys, and used them for paying their own troops.

I Return to Moulins

It was about this time that we heard of the return of General Buonaparte, who, rapidly traversing France, arrived unexpectedly at Paris; and very shortly after we learnt of the changes that his presence brought about in the Government. As we watched his march towards the supreme power, some divined what he was to become, others imagined they saw in him the support of the royalist cause, and the forerunner of the Bourbons, for whose return they declared he was preparing. A great many waited, unwilling to form an opinion; but we all had need of peace and rest, we all longed to be able to sleep at night without fear of being wakened and carried off by the revolutionary *sbirri*, who were the ready agents of every sort of tyranny, including their own. This general and widespread feeling helped Buonaparte to his ends,[1] and the moderation which he encouraged in the Government justified our expectations.

Some *emigrés* came home at once; we heard that several of them had had their names struck out of the list. My father himself returned to Lyons. I desired much to go back to Moulins, and thinking that my presence there might be useful, I wrote to M. Delacoste,[2] prefect of the department, to ask for permission to that effect. He replied very graciously that although my name was still upon the list of *emigrés*, the injustice of this inscription was so generally known and recognised that I could go to Moulins without any anxiety, and consider myself as under protection.

The reception that awaited me at Moulins was exceedingly flattering. All my father's friends and acquaintances came to see me; it was very pleasant to find that so much interest was still felt in him, and I delighted in every mark of esteem and sympathy. My return, moreover, was a sign of renewed hope, which all shared alike. I was the first to come back, but like the swallow, I foretold the spring.

[1] Buonaparte was elected First Consul on the 13th December 1799.
[2] Frothier-Delacoste-Messelières.

CHAPTER XX

Flattering reception at Moulins—Louise's proposal—I reproach myself—My father at Lyons—M. Lemaire—To Geneva for a consultation—I am pronounced consumptive—Back to Lyons—I am sent to Battouée for treatment—M. So-and-so—I go with my father to Paris—Our names are removed from the list of *emigrés*—My brother proposes to go to America—He gives it up—I go to Auxonne—We settle at Moulins—I look for something to do—My father's grief—I refuse a situation.

IT is rare for a young person to be surrounded with such consideration as I was at Moulins; and I was proud of it, not because I felt myself in any way worthy, but because it was a proof of the honourable position which my family had filled. It was a legacy from my aunt; for these kind friends remembered that I was her niece and adopted daughter, and imagined they saw in me a faint reflection of her virtues. Nevertheless I was sorely lacking in the very qualities they attributed to me, as the following story shows.

One morning my aunt's former cook[1] entered my room. She was dressed in her best, and bearing herself with the importance of an ambassadress at the least, she came up to me very ceremoniously. "What is the matter with you to-day, Louise?" I cried gaily; "you look as if something were on hand. Are you going to a wedding?"

"If there is no wedding *yet*," she replied solemnly,

[1] When my aunt left Moulins she gave a chest full of family papers into the charge of this woman, who faithfully preserved it during the Terror; but one fine day when the danger was over she was seized on by such a panic of fear, that she opened the chest, burnt the papers, and so completed our ruin. "Ah, Mademoiselle," she said to me afterwards, "I knew I did wrong; but I could not master that awful terror that came over me, and I spent two nights in tearing up and burning the papers."

"there is at least question of a marriage, and it concerns you, Mademoiselle."

I remained stupefied at so apt a rejoinder. She went on to inform me that she had been charged to sound my inclinations and to ask me, on behalf of a gentleman whom she named, whether I would be willing to marry his son; if I were willing to do so, he, on his side, undertook to buy back the estate of Echerolles. I was so much astonished that such a demand had not been made through one of my relatives, and so fearful lest a snare were hidden in the promise I was asked to give, that I answered immediately and without reflection, "I have lost everything already save my liberty, but *that* I will preserve."

"Nevertheless, Mademoiselle," Louise suggested, "think of your father and your circumstances. This is a most worthy man, and his son is all you could wish for."

"I have never seen him," I said, "and he does not know me. How can I tell that he would care for me?" . . . I was not to be persuaded; Louise's objections were all vain, and ultimately she went away discomfited, leaving me very pleased with my fine speeches and my prudence, which was mere self-sufficient folly. M. L——'s proposal was worthy of being treated with respect and consideration; had I asked for time to think over it, I could have taken counsel of persons who were better fitted than I to decide wisely in a matter so important. M. L—— belonged to a very respectable family of the higher *bourgeoisie*, and was himself greatly respected. I repeat that I undoubtedly ought to have given his proposal the serious attention that it merited, for I am sure that in the well-known generosity of his character, he would have done much for my father whom he knew and esteemed. I have often reproached myself for my light and thoughtless conduct in this affair, and every time that I saw my father suffering and unhappy the memory of my folly lay heavily upon my heart. "If I had chosen," I said

to myself, "I could have given him back the life which ought to have been his, prosperous, honourable," . . . but it was too late! How carefully we should reflect over all our actions, unimportant though they may seem at first sight; for in life, after all, there is nothing that is truly unimportant, nothing that does not bear an effect on us till death, that does not follow us with its consequences throughout our existence. . . . Further, I had no doubt made myself appear disdainful and haughty, when I was only silly and inconsiderate.

When my father returned to Lyons this time, he did not lodge with Madame Guichard, where the board he would have to pay was now beyond his means, but with his tailor, M. Lemaire, who, when he had sent him word that he might return with safety, had at the same time proposed that he should stay in his house. "You will find a little room ready for you," he said, "and a place at our table with plenty of good if plain food. Come as soon as you can." . . . My father accepted his proposal and took up his abode with him; he found himself exceedingly comfortable, and Madame Lemaire, a kind and good creature, cared for him as if he were her own father. Being afraid of inconveniencing these worthy people, I did not intend to go to Lyons, till one day I received a note from M. Lemaire, who wrote in his bad French (he came from Liège), but with simple cordiality, "We shall eat a turkey at Christmas, come and share it; your papa wearies for you, and we expect you." So I went; I saw my father again, I sat at our good friend's table, as I have often done since, learning to feel myself at home in this little household and to appreciate the kind hearts that were too sincerely modest to perceive their own virtues.

It was at this time that my bad health declared itself unmistakably; for hitherto I had been so accustomed to suffering more or less that I had not realised myself how much worse I was. My father, distressed at my repugnance to seeing a doctor, spoke

of his anxiety about me to my younger brother who was then at Geneva,[1] where M. de Guériot was in command of the artillery. Chambolle thereupon arrived at Lyons; he had come, he declared, to take me to see some friends he had made in Dauphiné, and to show me Geneva, where M. de Guériot invited me to pay him a visit. My father approving of this proposal, I accepted it with delight.

It was a charming expedition; we went to Grenoble and several other towns, in which my brother had acquaintances, and I remember with amusement that when we arrived at Saint-Marcellin, he said to me: "Here, the dinner they give you is according to their friendship; and as they are very fond of me, we shall have to eat a great deal." In fact, at a supper where we were only four at table I counted five very large joints, and we found it impossible to do justice to friendship on such a scale! We travelled by way of Chambéry to Geneva, where we arrived in safety, and M. de Guériot, after welcoming me with a kindness that was truly paternal, inquired tenderly after my health. "To-morrow," he said, "my dear little girl, you will do nothing but rest; but the day after to-morrow you are to go and see Dr. Jurine, who expects you. I have told him that you were on your way hither to consult him."

Thus I learnt the real object of my journey. This Dr. Jurine had a wide and well-merited reputation, and I could not avoid going to see him now that all had been arranged for me to do so. The result was serious; he declared that my symptoms were very alarming, and that I was distinctly consumptive. He put me on the dietary usual for this disease, and prescribed a treatment and remedies that seemed to me to be violent. I agreed to everything, however, with perfect resignation. . . . The doctor would have preferred to watch the effect of the treatment he had

[1] Geneva then belonged to France, and was the chief town of the department of Mont-Blanc.

ordered for me, and to keep me under his own eye, but as M. de Guériot[1] was on the point of leaving Geneva, his departure necessitated that of my brother, and I was obliged to return alone to Lyons, carrying with me the grateful memory of a journey that I owed entirely to my brother's generous affection.

I cannot resist making some remarks here upon these consultations that we go so far to seek, and that have to be so quickly delivered. The invalid cannot always describe his feelings exactly, and there may be deceptive symptoms; the doctor does not know the peculiarities of temperament of the stranger who seeks his advice any more than he knows his life and its habits, and is easily misled; the result is that the patient may go away entirely deceived, and encouraged to pursue a totally wrong treatment. Thus my doctor at Geneva, clever man though he was, having convinced himself that I was consumptive, helped me to destroy my stomach, where the mischief really was, in attempting to cure my chest which had nothing wrong with it.

My father was much distressed by this consultation; and I found myself obliged to leave him, as it was impossible to carry out the treatment ordered for me in M. Lemaire's house. I wrote therefore to ask Mademoiselle de Lespinasse if she would take me in, and the spring found me once more at Battouée. I need not speak here of the sorrow I felt at leaving my father. I was daily losing strength, and when I quitted Lyons I never expected to see it again; my friends bade me farewell as if I were at the point of death, and the solemnity of these separations increased the depression and melancholy which were themselves undermining my health. The journey, too, was very trying, for the diligences and *patasches*,[2] the only conveyances I could

[1] He had been appointed director of the arsenal at Auxonne.

[2] These were small two-wheeled carts holding four, sitting back to back. They were driven by a man sitting on the shaft, and had only one horse, but they were nearly as quick as the mail-coaches.

afford, were very hard and uncomfortable, and when I arrived at my cousin's, I was utterly tired and worn out.

I began at once to take asses' milk. Mademoiselle de Bézé came to stay in the house, and though the times were sad, we passed many happy moments together. An old abbé, Pepin, was then living at Battouée, under the name of M. du Raisin, and being described to any strangers as a friend of the family, he enjoyed comparative safety and freedom. Moreover, there was no longer the same desire to seek out and find victims, though the *emigrés* did not yet venture to show themselves openly.

We were all sitting in the salon one afternoon at dusk, when a visitor was announced; it was a man of humble manner and downcast look, who explained in a low voice how much it cost him to beg for help from persons to whom he was unknown, but that he was obliged to do so by his miserable circumstances. He was, he said, an *emigré* without passport and without resources; and not knowing whither to go, he begged for a shelter for this one night. My cousin scarcely let him finish before he turned to us, and presenting the stranger as an unfortunate person whose sufferings touched him deeply, recommended him to his daughter's care. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was always ready to help every one who was unhappy; but this man had a further claim upon her, for her uncles, her cousins, were *emigrés* also, and were perhaps obliged themselves to beg for help from some compassionate heart.

Meanwhile I, who recognised the stranger as my gentleman to whom I once gave twelve francs,[1] felt greatly embarrassed by the recollection and pretended not to know him again, and I was grateful to him for sparing my feelings by doing the same. I said to my cousin that I thought I had seen him two years before at Madame Grimauld's; but as I was afraid of repeating details inexactly after so long, I laid small stress

[1] I have spoken elsewhere of this person, whom Mme. Grimauld treated so coldly.

on all that I remembered of the interview. It seemed to me that he had then given his name as Lebrun, and that he had spoken of having two sisters living at Bourges in conventual orders; now there was no mention of anything of the kind in the touching history of his latest misfortunes. After having been exposed, he told us, to many dangers, he was forced for a second time to leave France; and when, worn out with wandering in exile, he had attempted to return, he was seized as soon as he crossed the frontier, and dragged from prison to prison. He had not long succeeded in making his escape. . . . His story moved us so profoundly that we held our breaths for fear of losing a word; for, it is not to be denied, he was amazingly clever at awakening sympathy, and when he retired he left us deeply touched with his misfortunes, and only regretting we could do so little to help him.

The blue overcoat that had awakened Madame Grimauld's suspicions, had now given place to one of grey. His appearance, which was certainly not distinguished, might rather be described as *humble* than modest; but his circumstances were enough to make him interesting in our eyes. When he went to his room he gave to the servant a shirt and two pocket-handkerchiefs, begging her to have them washed at once, as he intended to leave in the morning; though, as a matter of fact, he only got up at a very late hour. Long before he was awake my cousin, who had heard about the shirt and had seen that it was little more than rags, made an appeal to our goodwill and energy. A piece of linen was rapidly measured and cut out, and under our fingers was transformed into good shirts, so that by the time the stranger made his appearance, we were all hard at work, and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was refooting some old stockings belonging to her father—also for our *emigré*, as he declared himself to be. He advanced modestly to thank her for her hospitality, and to take his leave; but my cousin told him that he must still be too tired to continue his journey, and

that she had been commissioned by her father to invite him to stay with them for a few days. He replied that he was afraid of seeming importunate, hesitated, and finally allowed himself to be persuaded, while we went on with our work more energetically than ever. He retired to some little distance and remained there respectfully, speaking little save when directly addressed. I have already said that he was a common-looking person, but, as we told each other, there were *emigrés* of every class. He did not impress us as being amiable; but, as we told each other again, one can be a very good soldier without being an amiable person. In fact, we were determined to make every allowance for him, and not to blame him if he failed in certain ways to please us.

On his side he seemed desirous of showing his gratitude by doing all he could to serve us; and our indulgence towards him prevented us from allowing that his manners were somewhat servile. Madame de Bézé's little son sometimes went out with us, riding on a donkey; the stranger gave him all his attention, holding him on his steed, trotting, walking, and telling him stories that seemed amazingly absorbing. Entirely occupied with the child, he joined rarely in the conversation of the rest of the party as we wandered through the peaceful woods of Battouée; but no sooner had we returned to the house than it was a different matter, for we did not know what to give him to do in answer to his entreaties to be made useful. He declared at last that he could wind wool, whereupon Mademoiselle de Lespinasse opened her cupboards and brought out all that she had; while he told us that once, having been wounded in the heel, and being unable to keep up with his comrades, he had had no other means than this of making his livelihood. "In what country was that?" one of us asked. "In Hungary," he said. We knew little[1] about the march of Condé's army,

[1] It is certain that few knew much of anything that took place outside of France; we, for instance, were exceedingly ignorant.

and allowed Hungary to pass without reflection. He remained nearly a month with us without telling us his name, and out of discretion we never asked what it might be. This astonished the little Bézé, who one day came to us with the inquiry, "Doesn't the gentleman call himself anything at all?" "My dear," I replied, "I think his name must be M. So-and-so," and henceforward we always used this in speaking of the "gentleman who didn't call himself anything."

"How do you manage," my cousin said to him one day, "to make no mistake, and never to fall into the hands of persons who might betray you or lead you into danger?"

"Very easily," was M. So-and-so's reply. "I speak to the first peasant I meet, for peasants are less suspicious than townsfolk; I tell him I have forgotten the name of the person to whom I have been directed, but that I had been told he was greatly respected, known for his benevolence and generosity, and had been persecuted during the Terror. Thus in this district I was at once shown the way to Battouée, 'for,' they said, 'you must certainly mean M. Leblanc de Lespinasse.'" We applauded this speech, which contained a compliment to my good cousin as true as it was well turned.

At last, at the end of a month, he announced that he must go away. The shirts were made, the stockings repaired, there was no reason for urging him to stay longer. We tied them up into a package which we put into his room, while Madame de Bézé, the only one among us who had any money at her disposal, hid in his nightcap a sum which she called the price of his riding-lessons to her boy, but which her modesty prevented her from giving to him directly. M. So-and-so, however, appeared to observe nothing of all this, and after making humble adieux to us, he and his packet went away the next morning at daybreak. . . . These details concerning a person so obscure may seem minute and unnecessary, but they play their

part in a picture of our life in those days; and whatever opinion they may convey of M. So-and-so (to whom I shall refer later), it must be remembered that at the time of which I write we were led by circumstances to show him every indulgence. Public misfortunes and private persecutions had led to great isolation; so long as danger existed people remained shut up at home, rarely coming out, keeping up no social relations, afraid of being seen, and only desirous of being forgotten. Many of those who had been proscribed, in passing by night from one refuge to another, begged for a temporary asylum at the houses which lay upon their road; and in these cases a feeling of delicacy often prevented the host from asking the name of his visitor, who went away as he had come, unknown. The next night his place was probably filled by another fugitive, who came and went in his turn. No doubt bad men frequently exploited this generous hospitality and protection, for such hosts were slow to suspect fraud and easy to deceive; but they preferred, in spite of this danger, to continue the same open-hearted unquestioning benevolence, rather than run the risk of turning away from their doors any who were truly unfortunate. It was one of the virtues to which such times gave birth.

I think I have said that I had begun to take asses' milk, but my treatment was interrupted by a violent attack of whooping-cough. This malady, which is often dangerous to adults, was at that time epidemic in the district; many died of it, and I suffered from a very severe attack. However, under an appearance of great delicacy, I had an unexpected amount of strength, and I recovered sufficiently to join my father when, in autumn, he passed by Battouée on his way to Paris, where he was to solicit his definitive radiation from the list of *emigrés*. I cannot remember whether it was his desire that I should go with him or whether he gave way to my entreaties; but to be with him, or near him, was the only thing in the

world which could make me happy; it was my one joy, and I could not bear the wandering life that made me so utterly homeless. I was afraid of attaching myself to any one or to anything, knowing that at any moment I might have to leave them; in the midst of gardens, I denied myself even a single rose-bush to tend and care for, lest I should be forced to desert it. Who would look after it then? Like me, it would die.

My father's arrival must have done me good since I was able to go away with him, and it is to be supposed that I cannot have looked ill enough to have greatly alarmed him. It is true that my desire to go made me pretend to be better than I actually was. . . . We set out in a *patache*—a vehicle too simple to indulge in such a luxury as springs of any sort; but in those days we were not difficult to please. Seated directly over the axle, jolted along the rough paving of the highway, I and my whooping-cough arrived at Paris as if we had been quite well, and the first person I met there was a doctor, who the year before had bidden me an eternal farewell. He thought I was dead, and the sight of me surprised him immensely. Chambolle, my younger brother, arrived at Paris at the same time as we did; he hoped to obtain some advancement in his service, as well as to have his name finally struck out of the list of *emigrés*. This last we—that is, Chambolle and myself—obtained on the same day, and immediately afterwards we went together to promise not to trouble the peace of the Republic, a promise that I made very gaily; for it amused me much to be considered a dangerous personage. It was a very different matter to get my father's name removed from the list; we made fruitless appeals on every side, and time was wasted without any success, which gave me the double sorrow of seeing my father's discouragement, and of having to leave him once more. Our means did not permit of making a long stay at Paris.

It was about this time that there was some talk of a

maritime expedition against America, and many advantages were promised to all who volunteered to join it; my brother, thinking that he would thus be certain of advancement, hastened to give in his name. This news affected me deeply. I dreaded all such distant expeditions; he might a second time be made prisoner and perish, if not by the sword, then by the yellow fever, which made such ravages in these countries. Tenderly attached to my brother, and trembling at the dangers into which he was so ready to run, this new and sad separation, it seemed to me, would be eternal. . . . On his side he had made up his mind to it with great hesitation and difficulty; he believed it would be to his personal advantage; but our father's increasing age, and the isolation in which I might at any time be left, caused him deep anxiety and solicitude.

"If our father died," he said to me in the evening, "what would you do alone in France if I were far away, and could not come to help you?"

"I have thought over it lately," I answered. "I have been forced to think of it! I would become a Sister of Charity. I am fond of nursing the sick, and I should be serving God."

"Are you speaking seriously?" he cried, almost in alarm. "Do you really mean that?"

"Yes, I mean it. Do not think that it is a passing fancy; it has been my intention for a long time. My bad health is an obstacle, but I trust it may improve." My father was sound asleep while we sat beside the fire talking. . . . Chambolle left me without saying more, looking very serious and troubled; and at daybreak I found him beside my bed.

"Alexandrine," he said, "would you really become a Sister of Charity if—— ?"

"Yes, and with pleasure."

"I have not shut an eye all night, and I can think of nothing else. I know that my going away makes you unhappy; promise me to give up your idea, and

I will abandon mine. Say good-bye to the Sisters of Charity, and I will say good-bye to America! There is still time for me to withdraw my name if you are willing."

I gave him my promise, and he stayed in France.

As I have already said, the radiation of my father's name was a long business. A poor man's petitions are treated with small attention, for there is nothing either to fear or to hope from him; he is despoiled of the little that he has by keeping him hanging on for weeks and months, wasting his time and emptying his purse. He is told, "If you do not ask yourself, you will get nothing;" he comes and he asks, and still he gets nothing because he is poor, and because he cannot *buy* what he wants like the rich man, who can get everything when he needs nothing. Every door opens to wealth and is shut to poverty, as we soon found out.

It was settled that I and my brother were to go to M. de Guériot at Auxonne, while my father, who was unwilling to give up all hope of his radiation, took up his lodging with an acquaintance, who kindly told him to stay until his affairs were settled—an unexpected hospitality that filled us all with gratitude. Once more I parted from my father; Chambolle had started before me to make the journey on foot, as we could not afford more than one place in the diligence. I was in the *cabriolet*, exposed to all the effects of the weather; for a leather curtain, which could be drawn at the side only, protected the travellers very imperfectly. I set out in the middle of a violent return of my whooping-cough, insufficiently clothed, and arrived very ill at Auxonne.

The kindness and care with which Madame de Guériot and her husband treated me soon helped me to recover, and I look back upon the time I spent with them as one of the happiest of my life. I spent a delightful winter in their charge, enjoying the company of my brother, and comforted by the hopes now held out to

my father of his final radiation, which actually took place in the following spring. Shortly after he obtained a pension of eighteen hundred francs. It was not what was due to his rank;[1] but they pretended that he had not held his command long enough to have a right to the whole pension, and that he could not claim more than half. He had to content himself with what he could get, and be thankful that he got it.

In spite of the repugnance that my father felt to returning to Moulins, he decided to go there, in the hope of coming to an arrangement with some of the persons who had become possessed of his estates. There were already many examples of worthy people who had been touched by their own conscience and the poverty of those whom the Republic had despoiled; they came forward with proposals so reasonable that some understanding was possible, and the lands passed back to their rightful owners. Some very generously returned them without any conditions whatever, contenting themselves with the profits they had made out of estates which had cost them nothing; but others, while proposing to do as much, added impossible conditions, and then, boasting of their own disinterestedness, complained of those whom they pretended to oblige. "It is they who have refused," they declared. Generosity can be worn as a disguise like anything else.

Thus my brother and I betook ourselves to Moulins, where my father rejoined us, in a small lodging suited to his narrow fortune. We had furnished it with some of our own furniture, preserved for us by M. de Tarade in a little hut that he had bought "from the Nation," as we said then; he gave it all back to my father. My nurse, Madame Duvernai, having spent the time since my sister's death with some friends, returned to us now that she thought we should find her of use; and with a woman to help her, she took entire charge of our household. We lived in the strict simplicity

[1] I have already, I think, said that he was a major-general.

and economy that our circumstances necessitated; Chambolle went back to M. de Guériot at Auxonne, and my elder brother presently rejoined us from Germany. It was the first time for many years that we may be said to have had a home of our own.

Only one of the persons who had obtained possession of our lands was willing to give up his share under conditions that were reasonable, though we found them heavy. Another, it is true, boasted that he had offered us Écherolles itself, but he took care not to say on what terms. Thus he acquired at our expense a reputation for generosity, and at the same time kept a tight hold upon the estate. There were, however, many *emigrés* more fortunate than we were, who succeeded in recovering a great part of their former possessions; by practising great economy they gradually paid off the debts they had incurred in thus buying back their lands, and were able to settle down peacefully in their own homes. But there are families who seem fated to "go under," and ours could never recover itself. All our efforts to improve our fortunes were vain. Whether it was that we none of us understood business sufficiently, or whether, as I have just said, we were destined by other circumstances to fail, I do not know. The insignificant sum which was all that we had recovered did not suffice to buy back even the *one* estate which was returned to my father; the rest had been borrowed, so that we were burdened with a debt. My father's small pension could not support us all. . . . How many bitter thoughts mingled with the happiness of this home life, for which we had so unceasingly longed; and how often I reproached myself with being a burden on my father, when I reflected how much better off he would have been without us to support! This so weighed upon my mind, that after long meditation I determined to put my life to some practical use, and to seek for a situation. "Perhaps," I said to myself, "I might even be able to add something to his insufficient in-

come;" and once I had made up my mind I could think of nothing else. My elder brother, who was hindered by the hesitation and indecision of his character from any determined action on his own part, nevertheless gave me good advice and encouraged me in my plans; and my father,[1] knowing the uncertainty of my future, acknowledged their wisdom, but dreaded my going away, and could not bear to think of me as dependent on the caprices of others. I was offered the post of under-mistress in a school for girls at Moulins; this he opposed with all his might. Then a lady of our acquaintance proposed to place me with some relatives of her own, who required a maid for their children; they lived at Paris. She had not recommended me to them under my own name, for they would not have taken a young lady for the situation; but it was understood that I was to be apart from the rest of the household and to have no relations save with the lady herself. I was ready for anything; but my poor father could not bear it, and all that miserable day we kept apart, unwilling to read in each other's eyes the interminable question and answer—

"My daughter a maid, a servant!"

"For your sake, father, ought I not?"

How unhappy he looked! . . . I refused the place. His joy was great, and by the depth of my own relief I realised how much it would have cost me to accept such a situation. I began to realise how many things are unknown to people who are rich and happy; they have never felt the struggle between necessity and affection, nor perceived the misery of a sensitiveness that is a virtue in the great, but an unpardonable crime in the poor.

[1] I must add here that my father's vigorous health enabled me to leave him without any anxiety, for had he needed my care I should never have dreamt of going away from him. Besides, he proposed to live in the town where I should find a place, so as to be near me.

CHAPTER XXI

My father obtains employment in the Entreprise des Vélocifères at Lyons—A singular romance—He marries again—I make the acquaintance of my stepmother—My father permits me to seek employment—Mme. de Malet—M. de Lancry—I decide to go to Russia—I leave Moulins without venturing to tell my nurse of my plans.

WHEN my father finally lost all hope of recovering his estates, he was broken-hearted, and Moulins became hateful to him. We realised that for his sake we must leave it and endeavour to distract him from his melancholy by fresh scenes and surroundings; and to this end we went to stay with some relatives in the country, where my father, welcomed with affection and seeing nothing about him that recalled sad memories, soon recovered his natural gaiety and vivacity. He had so much of both as was very rare at his age, and this made him a most charming companion. As for me, I gave up all idea of leaving him; since my presence made him happier, I was content that my life should be spent peaceably in waiting upon him, and I had made up my mind to this when a letter from Martial, my elder brother, who had not gone with us into the country, gave a new turn to our wheel of fortune, and thrust us once more into the unknown.

The Marquis de Chabannes had just obtained a patent for a new kind of diligence, which is now familiar to every one, the *vélocifères*, as they were called. Entrusted with the organisation of a regular service between Paris and Lyons, he was passing through Moulins when he met my brother Martial,

and charged him to offer my father the post of manager of the Lyons office, with a salary of twelve hundred francs. Many *emigrés* had been similarly placed by the generosity of the Marquis de Chabannes, who thus came nobly to the help of his brothers-in-arms and companions in misfortune; but I do not know whether his affairs prospered the better for his benevolence. I have always been convinced that my worthy father must have made a simply detestable manager for such a bureau. . . . However, my brother, who was appointed an inspector in the same concern, had already gone to Lyons, and begged my father to join him there at once, so as to commence work without delay. It was an unnecessary request; for no sooner did my father see a new career opening before him than he rushed into it with the impetuosity of a young man, and, intoxicated by the hopes held out to him, he started immediately on foot, to catch the Lyons coach as it passed through a small neighbouring town. In the course of a few hours I was once more separated from him and cut off from the quiet life I had planned to spend so contentedly at his side; but I had no right to complain, for it was for my sake that my father was so ready to spend his last years in working to provide for me. His departure affected me deeply; I could not bear to see him at his advanced age so gladly accepting the hard life of an office clerk.

He had promised that I should rejoin him as soon as he was definitely settled in Lyons. Many months passed by; I was impatiently awaiting his permission to go to him when, instead, he sent me news that seemed to me the most impossible, the most extraordinary that I could ever have imagined. He was going to be married! He told me the story with so much gaiety and wit that I am sorry I cannot let him speak for himself, but I no longer have his letter.

"I have been asked in marriage," he wrote; "I have no desire to accept, but since I am considered

so pleasing and amiable, I am willing to dispose of myself for the sum of eighteen thousand francs; if they are settled on you, the bargain is made."

I wrote to him at once begging him not to sacrifice his comfort for me, for I should never console myself for having been, perhaps, the cause of future unhappiness; but my letter arrived too late. He informed me very shortly after that his marriage had already taken place, and did not make any secret of the fact that it had been precipitated at the desire of his wife. This seemed so strange that I was exceedingly anxious about it, finding it hard to account for the reasons which had led Mademoiselle de Cirlot into taking such a step; but I was obliged to acknowledge later on that the marriage turned out happily, and that we had every cause to be grateful for an event that at first both perplexed and alarmed us.

My father, it appeared, had been kept to the house for several days by a bad cold, when he received the visit of a gentleman whom he frequently met in society. This gentleman, rather astonished, himself, with his commission, informed my father, after a long preamble, that he had come to make him a proposal of marriage, or rather to offer him the hand of a lady who found him pleasing. This news threw my father into an amazement that cannot be described. "Does she know," he cried, "that I have lost every penny?"

"Yes."

"And that I have three children?"

"Yes."

"That I have only a small pension?"

"Yes."

"That I am seventy-four years of age?"

"She knows all that, and she will explain her reasons to you herself."

At these words Mademoiselle de Cirlot entered the room. As if the matter were already settled, she proceeded to give exact details of her affairs and her property, and was very pressing; so much so, in fact, that

my father, taken aback by so bold an attack, took refuge in declaring that he must first speak to his children, thereby thinking to secure himself an honourable retreat. She, however, doubtless considering it unwise to give him time to reflect, returned to the charge, and my father gave way before it. No sooner was Mademoiselle de Cirlot assured of his consent, than she undertook to make all the necessary arrangements, and the marriage forthwith took place. She eluded, very cleverly, the condition my father had made as to settling her money on me;[1] but he was so much touched by the proofs of her attachment that he no longer desired to "sell" himself for a sum down, and he said no more about it.

No doubt any one in reading this will think, as I did myself, that either the whole thing was an insane folly, or that the lady had something she wished to conceal; but this was not at all the case. Later on, when I saw her in the midst of her family, I understood the real history of the affair.

Mademoiselle de Cirlot was fifty years of age when she took it into her head to marry my father, whom she frequently met at the house of her sister, Madame du Foissac. She had grown old under the wing of this sister, whose husband treated her with scant politeness and made constant fun of her; not clever enough to retaliate, she saw that they looked upon her as an overgrown child and speculated on her money at the same time that they publicly held her little peculiarities up to general ridicule. There is no creature so feeble that it has not its moments of strength and energy. At the moment when such a thing was least expected she made her escape from this humiliating tutelage, and was led by my father's amiability and the esteem which was so widely felt

[1] This was not through ill-will or want of heart; but she was afraid that if this clause were made known to her family before the marriage took place, they would have interfered to prevent it. If she did not quite carry out, as regards me, the promise she made to my father, it is only fair to state that she treated my younger brother with great generosity.

for him to seek in him the protector of whom she stood in need. To succeed in an affair of the kind on which the happiness of her future depended, both secrecy and speed were necessary; and this explains much in her conduct that at the time seemed to me inexplicable.

Ignorant as I then was of Mademoiselle de Cirlot's motives, I confess I was prejudiced against her, and my amazement at finding myself possessed of a step-mother was mixed with no little irritation. However, I left Burgundy (where I had been meanwhile living) to rejoin my father and make the acquaintance of his wife; and travelling by water, I arrived at Lyons in the passenger-boat.[1] Every one knows what such an arrival is, and the bustle and excitement that awakens the instant the boat touches the shore. I was waiting quietly in a corner till the crowd of passengers, luggage, and porters should disperse and allow me to pass, when I saw before me a dear and familiar face; in an instant I was in my father's arms and we were talking as people do who have been long separated. Suddenly he said, "My wife is waiting for you;" I had forgotten that he had a wife! . . . We started, and as we went we talked again, till once more my father paused and cried, "There she is!" I had again become oblivious of her existence! I was standing in front of a small plump woman, with a large, flat, high-coloured face and scarcely any visible nose; she wore a sort of bonnet in black and orange, with a Spanish scarf terminating in a tassel of the same colours bobbing about on her shoulders. I was stupefied; but in justice I must allow that her love for brilliant colours did not prevent her from being a very excellent person.

When our affairs were settled at Moulins, which we now finally quitted, I went to live with my father; but things were no longer what they had been, and instead of being useful to him, I felt myself in the

[1] *Coche d'eau*, literally water-coach. It was the usual name for river boats used for a passenger service.—*Trans.*

way. The small fortune of my father's wife,[1] joined to his pension, was sufficient for their simple needs; but I was quite aware that my presence in their household was a heavy burden upon them. Madame des Écherolles took such care of her husband that I could leave him without anxiety as to his comfort and wellbeing, and I felt that in so doing I should gratify my stepmother's most ardent desire, for she feared and detested any affection that might rival hers in her husband's heart.

On his side, my father again became uneasy at seeing me without any provision for the future. "If I die," he said to me one day, "you will be left without resources. How I dread dying, for your sake!" Profiting by the opportunity, I begged him to permit me to look for a situation, even were it outside of France; "for once the sacrifice is made," I said, "the happiness of knowing that I am provided for will make up to you for my absence, and your last moments will not be troubled by the thought of leaving me in destitution." I shall never forget his answer, when his agitation allowed him to speak: "I consent, my dear daughter; your prosperity will help me to bear your absence, and a father ought to put aside his personal feelings when it is for the advantage of his children. Even if I must never see you again, go, and be happy." . . . My poor old father wept.

By the advice of my elder brother, I wrote to Madame de Malet, the wife of one of his comrades, whom he had met again in Paris. M. de Malet, it appeared, had made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle de Bélonde while he was in exile, and he married her before they returned together to France. It is a very imperious sentiment, rarely to be overcome or set aside, that draws a Frenchman back to his own country, but in my case a sentiment as powerful, though less tender,

[1] Very little was left her. She had had several houses burnt in the siege of Lyons, and only a few valuable jewels remained of the wealth she had once possessed.

urged me to leave it. I described my position very frankly in writing to this lady, whom I did not know personally; I explained to her all the reasons that obliged me to seek for a situation, and I did not hide my ignorance and want of education, laying emphasis only on the zeal and care with which I would endeavour to fulfil any duties entrusted to me. This letter, which I wrote with great emotion, touched her heart, and she sent me without delay a kind and sympathetic reply, full of a benevolence for which I could not be sufficiently grateful. "Would you be afraid to go to Russia?" she inquired. Ah! I was afraid of nothing save of feeling myself a burden to my father, and of living at the charge of others. "I would go farther still," I replied.

Madame de Malet's sister was a lady-in-waiting to her Royal Highness the Duchess Louis of Würtemberg, who was then at St. Petersburg, and it was through her that she hoped to obtain for me a post as governess. Moreover, about the same time a M. de Lancry, an *emigré* who had settled in St. Petersburg, came on a visit to Paris; my new friend spoke to him of me, and persuaded him to interest himself in my future. This gentleman, who had formerly been a soldier, was now at the head of a large foundry near St. Petersburg. The Empress-Dowager, who appreciated his talents and recognised his merits, afforded him her personal protection, and he was, besides, generally esteemed, as he deserved to be. He was always ready and willing to stretch out a helping hand to his companions in misfortune, and no sooner did he hear of my circumstances than he took an interest in me that was almost paternal. He made all the necessary arrangements with Madame de Malet for my journey, and once I reached Lübeck, he undertook all further expenses till I arrived at St. Petersburg. More than this, he insisted that I should stay for six months with a lady whom he knew, before I accepted a place, so that I should be better able to choose one that was suit-

able. "For she must not take the first that turns up," he declared. "If Mademoiselle des Écherolles is in too much of a hurry, she will lose all that she ought to gain by her sacrifice in going so far away. When she has obtained a really advantageous situation, then we can think about paying back what I may have advanced to her." So great a generosity removed all the difficulties from my path, and my departure was decided. As I had an uncle[1] already at St. Petersburg, this was another reason in favour of going thither. He was not, it is true, in a position to do much for me, but being well known, his name would serve in some sort as a protection, and at least he could guarantee that I was not one of the crowd of adventurers that hurried to Russia from all directions to ply their very dubious professions.

Such a parting as that for which I was now preparing was like death, save that I preserved all my sorrows and all my affections. I was looking upon everything I loved for the last time in my life; my friends grew dearer than ever, all around me more lovely, for presently I was to pass away from them and see them no more. It was a terrible moment; I dared not meet my poor father's eyes, and I felt the necessity for hastening a separation that every day of waiting made the more heart-breaking. I had some business at Moulins which served as a pretext, as I was obliged to go there to collect some money which was due to us, and which I needed for my journey. I asked permission to go thither, promising to return before I took my definitive departure, and deceiving my father and myself with this intention. "I will come back," I said, even as I was getting into the diligence. I can still see my father, my beloved father, standing silently with his eyes fixed on mine,

[1] This was M. de Tarade, my mother's brother, who had joined the Russian service when he became an *emigré*, and rose to the rank of rear-admiral. He lived in St. Petersburg on a small pension, and at the time of which I write had fallen into a second childhood.

keeping back his tears that he should not lose sight of me as the coach drove away. What sorrow was in our hearts! "I will come back!" But we both felt then that an eternal farewell was impossible between us, and that it was better we should not meet again. We understood each other.

The few possessions that remained to us having been sold and divided amongst us, I found that I owned a small sum, barely sufficient to take me to Lübeck. It had been arranged that I should go to Paris in the spring, remaining till then at Moulins or in the Nivernais, to take leave of the friends from whom I had received so many marks of kindness and affection.

The rumour of my departure had, I found, been widely circulated; it was considered very adventurous and unwise, and was generally found fault with. What a forlorn hope! said society; why does she not stay with her friends, who would always be pleased to see her? But no, she expatriates herself! . . . and to what end? She will find nothing in Russia but disagreeables, disappointments, and dangers. . . . Even the prefect, the Marquis Delacoste, having lived in Russia, bade me think well before I went to a country so distant, where I must be prepared to find many deceptions; in short, I was blamed by every one. Yet what did they propose to me in place of the hopes they strove to take away, the hopes which I had purchased by so great a sacrifice? Nothing. . . . Blame, fault-finding, and blame again, was all they had to give me; and I found it hard to have so many friends who would not even allow me the poor comfort of hopefulness, which they called illusion. I think, indeed, that I should have quitted Moulins at once if I had not been detained there on account of a friend as unfortunate as myself, Mademoiselle Guichard, for whom I was able to obtain a place as governess in Moulins itself. I should not have mentioned this circumstance if I had not desired to point out that

even the most unfortunate and least influential person can sometimes be of use to others, and taste thereby a joy that is all the sweeter for being rare. I owed so much gratitude to Madame Guichard,[1] that I was very happy to have a chance of showing her that I had not forgotten it.

I must here mention a matter that has caused me very deep regret, I might almost say remorse. My nurse, Madame Duvernai, excellent and devoted creature that she was, had followed us to Lyons, where my stepmother refused to receive her in her house. Whether it was that she objected to the expense, or whether my father's views on the subject[2] displeased her, I do not know, but he could neither make her give way, nor overcome the antipathy which had sprung up between the two women. My poor nurse was thus obliged to accept the kind offer made by Madame Guichard, who took her into her own house, where, indeed, she did work that more than repaid the cost of her support. She lived in the hope of seeing the difficulties which had caused our separation some day smoothed away, when we should all once more live happily together; thus it can be imagined that my departure for Russia was a terrible blow for her.

I confess that I had not the courage to break the news to her myself, worn out as I was by so many farewells. I let her believe that I was going away only for a short time, and my good nurse parted from me without uneasiness or distress. I placed to her credit at Lyons a sum of money that was my own property, and which my father left me free to dispose of as I desired; but she was not to be outdone in generosity, and let it lie untouched, supporting herself up to the day of her death by the work of her own

[1] My father was hidden for a long time in her house.

[2] He had insisted that my nurse should be treated and looked upon as a valued friend of the family. Perhaps my stepmother fancied that in her also she might find an influence which should rival her own. She was mistaken.

hands. It was a long time before she forgave me for having doubted her strength of mind and her love for me, and for having parted from her without telling her my intentions; it was, indeed, only after my earnest entreaties, and when convinced of my sorrow at having caused her pain, that she accorded me a pardon without which I could have known no happiness.

Madame Guichard's affairs having obliged her to sell her house, my nurse found a home with my father's good friend, M. Fellot,[1] where as long as she lived she was treated with the respect and consideration she deserved. I am glad to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to this gentleman; we owed him much for all that he had done for us already, and we owed him still more for undertaking a duty that was made sacred in my eyes by my love for Madame Duvernai. I make no excuse for giving these details, for all that is good and great has a right to be held up for admiration, and it is only our duty to do justice as far as we can to these generous but humble characters that are too modest to display their own merits. Fame tells the story of noble deeds to all the universe, and men learn from her lips of heroism and genius, of great crimes and celebrated errors; but the simple virtues are overlooked by her, and as to them she is dumb. Let my feeble voice then be raised to give witness to the generosity, the disinterestedness, the fidelity, the pure sentiments and the greatness of soul of a poor and uneducated woman.

[1] We had kept up our friendly relations with M. Fellot ever since the siege of Lyons. He had become greatly attached to my father, and was not afraid to receive him and give him a refuge in his house even at the most dangerous time. . . . It will perhaps be remembered that he formed part of the deputation that was sent to tell my father that he had been chosen to command the Lyonnais.

CHAPTER XXII

I start for Paris accompanied by Mme. de Bézé—War is declared with Russia—I cannot go thither—Mme. de Bézé asks me to return to the Nivernais—I decline—A melancholy parting—M. Royer-Collard—Mdlle. d'A——In charge of a lunatic—A disagreeable affair—Character and intelligence of Mdlle. d'A——The matter is settled—The F—— family grateful—Victorine—The Baroness de Choiseul.

HAVING said my final farewell to my kind relatives in the Nivernais, I started for Paris, but had scarcely arrived there when war was declared and hostilities at once commenced. It was no longer possible to go to Russia, which was a cruel blow for me; and I asked myself in great distress how long this state of affairs would last, and what was to become of me. Madame de Bézé, who had accompanied me to Paris, invited me to return to the Nivernais and live with her till circumstances permitted me to carry out my plans; but I felt that it was wiser to refuse this kind offer, though God alone knows what it cost me to do so. If I had once returned, I could never have left it again; as it was, I had barely strength enough to bear this last parting. Obliged to return on business she quitted Paris very shortly, and I found myself alone.[1]

With her departure I severed the last link that bound me to my home, to the habits of all my past life, to the memory of everything I loved. Henceforward the past was cut off from the present, and I could say to no one, "You remember, you were there. . . ." There would be none to whom I could speak of my

[1] My elder brother was still at Paris, but as he was on the point of leaving, and as he lodged with a friend who lived at a great distance from where I was, I saw nothing of him, and was practically alone.

friends, none to share my recollections, no one near me but strangers. . . . Those who have never quitted their country and their home do not know the bitterness that fills every moment of the day, the little sorrows often unknown and unguessed by any but oneself: it is perhaps a word that stings, a look that recalls . . . a petty and constant suffering of which we would blush to complain and for which there is no compensation. I had taken leave of home and kin, with the firm determination never to return if I could not support myself without being a burden upon them: "And if I cannot succeed in this," I told one of my cousins, "then I must bid you farewell for ever, for I shall die rather than come back, and you will not know of my sufferings. If indeed you hope to see me again, you must pray that my plans may not fail."

When my cousin left me, I took a small and very modest room on the fourth storey in the same hotel where we had lodged together, and procured some needlework to help in paying my expenses. In the meantime I cultivated the acquaintances that I had made or rediscovered; Madame de Malet had welcomed me to Paris with the greatest kindness, and every day I learnt to value her friendship more highly. I shared my time between her and Mme. Royer-Collard,[1] who had been a de Piolenc, one of the young friends of whom I spoke in the early days of the Revolution, and whom I used to visit in still earlier days at the convent in Moulins. Désirée, her sister, had rejoined her at Paris—Désirée, whom I had last seen in the terrible days of the Terror as she left Lyons; both had suffered greatly, Victorine without quitting Chambéry where she had been born, Désirée and her young sister Agathe in travelling through Germany on foot, and working to support their aged father and the two

[1] Her husband was a doctor and brother of the Royer-Collard who held a high political post. The younger sister Agathe, when she returned to France, lived with an aunt along with her half-sister Césarine.

children of his second marriage. Still children themselves, what heavy duties had fallen to their share! Ah, those days were full of marvellous episodes, that to the charm of truth added the fascination of romance.

Our long separation had not made us forget the friendship of our childhood, and our affection for each other was still young and vigorous. It was sweet to share the memories of those distant days so far behind us, the sweeter that we had all three suffered so much since that happy time of peace. They gave me all that could brighten my solitary life —friendship, sympathy, and advice. I was not alone so long as they were there, and I delight in recalling all I owe to their affection.

But life is costly at Paris. My purse was growing empty; I could make but little, and I realised that I must contrive to economise, simply as I already existed. I resolved to go to the country, and to await there the possibility of making my departure for Russia; it was now autumn, and as I did not wish to encroach on the small sum which I had set aside for my journey, I wrote to ask Madame de Souligné[1] if she would let me pass the winter with her. She promptly replied that I was to go to her at once. I was making my preparations to do so, and hurrying to finish a strip of embroidery that I had undertaken, when M. Royer-Collard, my friend's husband, entered my little room; a visit from him must, I knew, foretell something unusual, for he had no time to waste in climbing to a fourth storey merely to make an idle call on a person who was not ill.

"I have come," he said at once, "to suggest a plan whereby you might remain at Paris. It is not altogether pleasant, perhaps, but you would grow accustomed to it; and you would be better situated for your

[1] I have spoken of her in the earlier chapters. Her husband had been guillotined at Lyons, and after the Terror she lived in a very small house near Villeneuve-la-Guyard. Her daughter, my friend, had recently died.

own affairs, as well as near us, your friends, so that we should sometimes be able to see you."

"Well, tell me what you have to propose.

It was nothing less than to put me in charge of the household of an insane lady. "You will have complete authority, comfortable rooms, twelve hundred francs, and all your expenses paid; that is the agreeable side of the business. On the other hand, I cannot conceal from you that you will practically be in the meantime a prisoner, and that you will have no other society than that of Mademoiselle d'A—— until the close of a legal action taken against M. F——, her guardian, by an old aunt, who declares that she is not insane. Both parties have agreed that until judgment is given they will not visit Mademoiselle d'A——, and that she is to be kept aloof from all discussions; and, to avoid any possible intrigues, no one up to that time will be allowed to enter or communicate with the house."

My circumstances prevented me from hesitating merely because I foresaw some disagreeables. "I have no right to refuse," I told my friend; "God has provided me with this, and I accept it gratefully." We settled when I was to go to Madame Royer-Collard's house to meet M. F——, to be seen and approved, as it were—a rather trying prospect; but I was reassured at once when it actually took place, for M. F—— was a man of good breeding, and he at once put me at my ease, avoiding every expression that might have galled me with a consciousness of the menial position which was to be mine.

"You are taking a great resolution," he said kindly; "but I will do all that I can to make your existence more bearable. My cousin is in better health than usual just now, and I am anxious that she should benefit by the society of a person of her own rank and class, that, having such an example before her, she may recall what she has forgotten of the manners and habits of good society."

M. Royer-Collard kindly undertook the business side

of the arrangement, for M. F—— did not speak to me at all of money matters, and indeed took the greatest care to avoid all the unpleasantnesses of which this first interview might have been full. In the meantime, while I was waiting the moment in which I was to go into service—let us say it without mincing—I was told the story of the lady who was to be my charge, which was as follows :—

Mademoiselle d'A——, witty and intelligent though she was, had always been somewhat eccentric in character, and this failing became accentuated by studies too abstruse for her brain. Her father, who had been in the service of the Comte d'Artois, was guillotined, her mother likewise; her brother died in Martinique, and she was left solitary. So many sorrows weakened her intellect and made her a prey to an extreme exaltation; and her large fortune was at the mercy of any intriguing person who gained an influence over her. An adventurer who won her affections, for instance, obtained considerable sums of money from her. Devoted to the cause of the Bourbons, heartbroken to see the irreligion that reigned in France, it may be said that piety, love, and politics united to bewilder and overturn her reason. For a long time her eccentricity, though it steadily increased, gave no sufficient grounds for her family to treat her as insane; but at last she herself provided the necessary proof, by writing a letter to Napoleon, and carrying it to the Tuileries. "I was careful," she told me later, in speaking of the causes that, in her opinion, had led to her seclusion, "I was careful to avoid putting a single pin into any part of my toilette, in order that I could not be accused of desiring to assassinate the Emperor." After having cited in this famous letter several ecclesiastical authorities, she declared to Napoleon that he was too great a man to wish to usurp the throne, and asked for an audience to arrange with him the best means of returning it to its legitimate occupant. Here the madness began; for this was the Dauphin, who

died at the Temple, but who was to reappear on a certain day at Mass in the Church of the Assumption, &c. &c. Napoleon sent this letter to Fouché, and presently, when Mademoiselle d'A—— was brought before him, her insanity was recognised. Her family then appointed M. F—— as administrator of her fortune, and he was authorised to take all the necessary measures which might assist her return to reason. This decision was very disconcerting to a number of people who had been making a large profit out of Mademoiselle d'A——'s derangement of intellect, and who had in their own interests striven to hide her condition from her family; violently irritated at losing such a source of income, but having no right to appeal for themselves, they put forward an old aunt of Mademoiselle d'A——'s, a person of small understanding and large credulity. They made use of her name to take action against the administrator of her niece's fortune, accusing him of having unjustly declared her to be mad, so as to gain possession of her wealth.

M. F—— demanded that during this process against him, Mademoiselle d'A——, his cousin, should be placed entirely under medical surveillance; he declared that, to avoid all suspicion of exerting any influence over her, he would not visit or communicate with her; but he insisted that his adversaries should use the same reserve, and as the tribunal found this request just and reasonable, the matter was so decided, and all communications with the exterior were forbidden. This was the reason that I was to be practically a prisoner.

When the day came for my installation in my new post, I went to M. F——'s house, along with my elder brother, who chanced to be in Paris. We all three got into a carriage, the fourth place being occupied by a M. Pussin, from the Salpêtrière, who was present every day at Mademoiselle d'A——'s dinner, and who was to introduce me to her. We traversed the Champs Elysées, and the carriage stopped at the entry of the Rue de Chaillot, in front of a small but pretty house,

my future prison. We went in very quietly, and M. Pussin left us while he visited Mademoiselle d'A——, but in spite of all our precautions she had heard us come in, and posting herself at the door of the room where she supposed we were, she looked through the keyhole. I immediately heard a sharp and angry voice call out, "I see a lady! I see M. F——! M. F—— here! Treachery, treachery!" which somewhat moved me by the expectation of a disagreeable reception. Presently, however, I was invited to go to her room; I confess that no court presentation has ever set my heart beating at such a rate, but I tried to look unconcerned as I made my appearance before her. She was at table, and received me with great politeness, making me sit down beside her, and inquiring into the reasons that led to my being in Paris. I replied that the misfortunes which had overwhelmed France had ruined my family, and that having come to Paris to make certain reclamations, I had been offered a lodging in the house that she occupied. M. Pussin here observed that it had been thought that in her solitary life she would find my society agreeable. Mademoiselle d'A——, delighted to make a new acquaintance, immediately had a place set for me, and invited me to dine with her daily during my stay in Paris; then, fixing me with her eye,[1] she cried, "I know you; yes, I recognise you now; you are the daughter of the Comte d'Artois, who died in the year 1783. I saw you buried; but what surprises me is that your eyes and teeth are so well preserved." It was all very well for me to assure her laughingly that I had no recollection of ever having died, she only repeated more decidedly, "Perhaps not, perhaps not; but, nevertheless, I recognise you very well."

At the close of dinner she withdrew to her own room and I to mine, where I hoped to find my brother and M. F——, but they were both gone! My blood seemed to freeze in my veins when I realised that I

[1] This is literal; she had but one.

was alone! alone, separated from all whom I knew, in the middle of Paris, and yet alone! My eyes filled with tears that I dared not shed, and I should have become absorbed in my sad thoughts if at this moment Mademoiselle d'A——'s man-servant had not entered my room to introduce me to the household which was henceforth to be under my orders. My new subordinates came in ceremoniously, each saluting me in turn; there were a maid, a nurse, a cook, the wife of the *portier*, and lastly the *portier* himself, with his hat in his hand. The house stood between a courtyard and a garden, and would have impressed me as charming if its owner had possessed her reason. . . . Shortly after this I received a note from M. F——, in which he excused himself for not having waited for my return, and explained that he had been afraid of being seen by his cousin and of thus rousing her to an excitement that might have made her turn against me. He congratulated me on having got on so well with her, and sent me, along with the note, a few books to occupy and lighten the first hours of a life so new to me. Touched by so much delicacy of feeling, I passed the rest of the day more cheerfully than I had expected, and was filled with a sense of gratitude.

I soon grew used to my surroundings. If I could receive no visitors, at least I was allowed occasionally to go out, and the interest that Mademoiselle d'A—— inspired in me made my confinement less irksome. She had great wit, a brilliant intelligence, and a surprising memory; she knew our classics by heart, and often talked with a good sense that surprised me and delighted me, till a sudden outburst of extravagance brought me back to reality. Sometimes she told me all the misfortunes of her family with a scrupulous exactitude, speaking with strong affection of her father and mother, and reasoning clearly enough on every subject that did not chance to awaken her insanity. At such moments she was greatly to be pitied, for she felt the loss of her independence and longed for her

liberty; and the cunning she displayed in her efforts to effect her escape required the most unceasing surveillance and precaution. She soon perceived that my authority was greater than her own. "Your eyes," she said to me, "have an extraordinary influence; I am in my own house, I am supposed to be the mistress of it, and yet I feel it is you who rule." Sometimes, indeed, she gave way to such fits of sorrow and distress that I wept in sympathy.

At first she was inclined to like me, but the authority with which she guessed that I was invested made her look upon me with a resentful suspiciousness, encouraged by the servants, who did not find my presence to their convenience. I do not intend to give minute details here of all the vexations with which I found myself surrounded in this little household, so full of intrigues, where the only person who cared disinterestedly for her mistress was Victoire, a peasant from one of her estates and her own goddaughter. It was from Mademoiselle d'A—— herself that I learnt what was said against me; for, in spite of her unhappy state, she was in her saner moments a person of good breeding, and seeing nothing about me to justify the suspicions which her servants endeavoured to instil into her, she said one day laughingly, "How stupid and credulous common people are! My maid here declares that my life is in danger from you." . . . There were times, however, when these suspicions returned to her memory, and she was apt to be difficult to manage.

Ordinarily, and when most herself, she was kind, original, amiable in her own way, clever at sustaining her opinion, and so brilliant and pertinacious in argument that she turned all our conversations into serious discussions. The stories she related to me were interesting and witty, full of an originality that was not wholly caused by her condition; for I felt that a natural eccentricity must always have had a place in her character.

Sometimes she laughed at my ignorance, and I cannot resist repeating here a few words that she said to me one day when we were walking together in the garden; she had been talking a good deal of nonsense about her favourite imaginations,[1] and I had fallen back into my own thoughts, when suddenly she paused and said to me—

"Have you ever had any lessons in astronomy?"

"No," I replied.

"But you must know something of the heavens?"

"I have gathered a few notions from my geography lessons."

"I am sure they taught you that the sun was a globe?"

"Yes, it is the accepted opinion."

"Well, they deceived you; the sun is a hole!" At these words I began to laugh. "Yes," she repeated, "I tell you the sun is a hole!" and going on with the rapt enthusiasm of some ancient prophetess, she cried, "The sun is a door into eternity, through which some feeble rays reach us of the grandeur of God![2] . . . You do not laugh any more."

"I confess," I said, "that I am silenced by your definition. I can only admire and wonder at it, as others would do in my place; for the idea is truly a beautiful one."

In her house I saw all the leading members of the Paris Faculty, MM. Portal, Déssessarts, Hallé, Periel, Audry, Royer-Collard, &c. &c., who came by turns and sometimes together to visit Mademoiselle d'A——. She told me that she was sometimes a little nervous when this imposing company was assembled in her room; but she very soon recovered herself and replied with ease to all the questions put to her. Even now, when thirty years have elapsed since those distant days, I cannot

[1] She thought herself by turns a priest, a queen, and a deserted wife. Frequently she saw the sky open and the hand of Providence holding the thread of man's life.

[2] I have not changed a single word.

but smile when I remember the absurd subjects gravely discussed by Mdlle. d'A—— and the honourable Faculty, who treated her fantastic ideas as solemnly as she did herself in their desire for the good of their patient.

While we were occupied in carrying out the orders of all these modern Æsculaps, the process was continuing, and the antagonists of M. F—— set the most contradictory stories on foot against him. Sometimes they declared that his cousin was not insane at all, and that he only made her out to be so in order to remain master of her fortune; sometimes they allowed that her mind was feeble, but declared that he had surrounded her with persons charged to prevent her from taking any remedies ordered by the faculty, with the object of making her recovery impossible. These scandalous stories, when they had sufficiently circulated in society, at last reached the tribunal exaggerated into crimes, or at least into imputations of the most serious nature. The result was that at last the Tribunal sent a commission to inquire directly into Mademoiselle d'A——'s condition, and to discover whether she indeed were confined in a sort of unhealthy prison, where, deprived of fresh air, badly lodged, ill served, and insufficiently fed, everything would tend to make her mad if she were not so already, or to prevent her from recovering her reason if she were really insane.

I was informed of the arrival of these gentlemen, to whom I presented all the persons in Mdlle. d'A——'s service, and replied to all their questions concerning the expenses of the household, her table, and her personal needs. They seemed satisfied and surprised with the comfort of her surroundings, and when I took them to her room I left them alone with her, wishing to prove to them that she was perfectly at liberty to speak to them as she desired. The old aunt did not follow my example, however; she had come to prepare her niece for this important visit, which was to decide as to the truth of the accusations which appeared under her name. During the whole of the

questioning that took place she held her niece's hand within her own and pressed it to warn her when she began to talk nonsense; but she gained nothing by this save from time to time an impatient, "Leave me alone, aunt; you know nothing about it."

The gentlemen inquired if Mademoiselle d'A—— had any complaints to make against the lady who lived with her, or against any of her domestics. She replied, "that they were all honest and faithful, and that she complained of nothing but the loss of her liberty; that she was rich and independent, and yet was wrongfully and without reason kept a prisoner. As to the lady who is here," she added, "she is an excellent person, and I should have no fault to find with her or any others about me, if they were not foolish enough to think they should obey some pretended doctors who order me all sorts of things I do not like. They give me baths and douches, . . . but I forgive them, for they all suffer from the fashionable disease."

"May we ask," inquired one of the gentlemen, "what this disease may be?"

"Oh, they are mad; they are harmless, it is true, but still they are mad, and so are the pretended doctors who come to see me. No doubt, messieurs, you have observed this disease that is spread all over Paris, and which depends on the moon, on Mars and Jupiter . . . on the constellations," . . . and off she went into the most fantastic extravagances. The poor aunt, greatly disconcerted, squeezed her niece's hand convulsively between her own at each piece of nonsense that escaped her; but Mademoiselle d'A—— was not to be restrained, and only repeated the more loudly—

"Leave me alone, aunt, do you hear? Why do you want to prevent me from speaking? I understand business matters far better than you do, who never in your life were able to understand anything."

Here the commission, having nothing further to learn, withdrew. The person who played the most ridiculous part in this scene was undoubtedly the

aunt, who had received, before witnesses, unmistakable proof against all that she had declared in the court of justice. I took her out to her carriage, and on the way she said to me, no doubt to keep up appearances, "Do not kill my niece!" "Madame," I replied, "your age excuses you,"—and I left her at once. Poor woman! she had lent her name, innocently enough, to a troop of low schemers who made her bear the blame of their iniquity, and dragged her down with them into the mud.

Shortly after this I was working quietly in my room, when M. F—— came in followed by one of his cousins. His presence in the house announced important news, in fact he had come straight from the Tribunal to tell me that he had gained his case. "You are the first to be told of it," he said, "because you have suffered so much in our cause. I am to remain as guardian of my cousin's person, and administrator of her estate. . . . After pronouncing judgment, the Imperial Procurator spoke of you."

"Of me! But why?"

"I wished him to do you justice, and to destroy all these calumnies. He represented most impressively the respect due to such misfortunes as have forced you into a situation so much beneath your rank, and condemned such imputations against a young lady, helpless and a stranger, to whom nothing is left but her honourable name. I hope," he added, "that you will dine with my mother to-morrow, when we shall all be there to thank you for what you have done for us."

I accepted with pleasure, for I was touched by the delicate way in which M. F—— ignored my position; but I was at the same time somewhat embarrassed at the thought of being presented to the whole family. However, I hid my nervousness under an enormous hat, and set out; I was greeted with all the graciousness and courtesy that distinguish persons who are both well born and well bred, and that were to be seen in perfection in this family, remarkable not only

for wit and amiability, but also for its virtue. I came home again well pleased and content, astonished that I was thanked for having only done my duty, and, I doubt not, made many mistakes and committed not a few follies.

"But tell me, Victorine," I said to Madame Royer-Collard, the first time that I saw her after the conclusion of the process, "what have I done that I required to be publicly justified?"

"What have you done? What! Are you ignorant of all that has been said, and all that you have been accused of?"

"How should I have heard anything, shut up as I have been?"

"Well, I will tell you; first of all, you are very beautiful—you see, you gain something through no one having seen you; then, you help M. F—— to spend his cousin's fortune; also, you have contrived to make yourself very agreeable to my husband, and you have all the necessary wit and cleverness to carry on these two intrigues at once."

"But this is horrible!" I cried; "how can they destroy the reputation of a woman who has harmed no one! Ah, how thankful I am that I have been spared the knowledge of such frightful things. I should have been unhappy indeed!"

"And, Madame Royer, they say," went on Victorine composedly, "is stupid enough to be fond of this dangerous person. But you found a defender in my aunt.[1] She took your part in an assembly where these calumnies were being circulated. 'M. Royer,' she said, 'is the husband of my niece; he is a very worthy man, and as to Mademoiselle des Écherolles, my cousin, she is not beautiful at all, but a young lady as estimable as she is unfortunate. Let us respect and pity her.'"

The end of this process made our life much easier. Mademoiselle d'A——'s state having been recognised as incurable, she was declared hopelessly insane, and no

[1] The Baroness de Choiseul.

further efforts were made to recover her reason. All that was now attempted was to make her existence as pleasant as was possible; and having nothing to vex or cross her moods, she lost much of her irritable humour, and the violent scenes which had alarmed us all became more rare. I cannot but allow that these scenes were sometimes not without danger, and before I leave this subject I will describe one of them.

Mdlle. d'A—— was never parted, day or night, from an immense green umbrella trimmed with white scarves and cockades, which she called the ægis of Providence, and to which she attributed certain powers of protecting her. The Faculty decided to take this famous ægis away from her; and when she came out of her bath one day she could not find it. Great commotion and greater fury! She upset all the house, ran all over the garden, and sought everywhere for her beloved treasure; when she came to dinner her face expressed the most violent grief, and the sight of the empty place usually occupied by her umbrella brought the consciousness of her loss to a crisis. She became so excited that no sooner had we sat down than she started up in fury, and seizing a knife, rushed at me. I imagined I could feel its point between my shoulders; it was a short moment, but unpleasing. It passed, fortunately. . . . I escaped with a fine fright, and a lesson in self-control, for in the middle of her fury she recovered her senses and went back quietly to her place without doing harm to any one. I did not ask her what she had been about to do, but thenceforward I dined alone.

I would liked to have had one of our Æsculaps between my shoulders and that knife, to let him appreciate all the difference between giving an order and carrying it out. The one is considerably easier than the other!

CHAPTER XXIII

M. So-and-so—Mme. de Malet's proposal—Engaged by the Duchess Louis of Würtemberg—M. Royer disapproves—Elisabeth de la R——: her story—I propose her in my place—M. F—— objects, but accepts her—Farewell to the Baroness de Choiseul—She wounds me, but is right—My departure—Arrival at Louisbourg—Death of Mdlle. de Bélonde—Discouragement—The young Princess—The Duchess—She consoles me—Her beauty and kindness—I attach myself to my pupils.

IN an earlier chapter I remarked that I was once more to come across "M. So-and-so," that strange being who looked like a rascal, yet was perhaps an honest man; and in fact he turned up unexpectedly one day while I was with Mdlle. d'A——. I recognised him perfectly, though he was changed (he said) by the effects of an illness; he walked with difficulty, limping badly, and was evidently in a state of abject poverty. His condition inspired me with a feeling of pity, quickly followed by one of repulsion; for, to my amazement, he was familiar with the whole of Mdlle. d'A——'s history, had known her brother, and was full of details about her family. Prodigious! I said to myself, this man knows everything! and I felt afraid of him, as if beneath his humble exterior I had suddenly caught sight of some vile serpent. I proposed to obtain his entrance into a charitable institution where he would be provided for up to the end of his life; he accepted gratefully, gave me a false address, and I never saw him again. I am even inclined to suspect that his infirmities went no further with him than the door. Is there not something horrible in an existence like this, built up of cunning

and fraud, where a man introduces himself into peaceful households under that guise which he thinks will best win their confidence, makes himself master of all their secrets, and uses them, innocent though they may be, as a means to deceive and delude others? What dissimulation! . . . Morality apart, I am astonished that any one should choose to be a rascal; it is so much easier to be an honest man!

Soon after Mdlle. d'A——'s case was decided I received a note from Mme. de Malet, begging me to go to her as soon as possible, as she had important news for me. "Sit down there," she cried, as soon as I appeared before her, "here are pens and paper. Now write your thanks to the Duchess Louis of Würtemberg, who has given you a post as governess to the princesses, her daughters."

"I! You cannot mean it; I, a governess to princesses! I have none of the qualities necessary for such a post; I should never have dreamt of raising my eyes so high; I have no accomplishments."

"You do not need them; the princesses have masters for everything."

"I have not had a sufficient education."

"You will have time to study; the princesses are young; you have plenty of time before you."

"But, I assure you, I do not feel myself capable——"

"But I know you," interrupted my kind friend, full of zeal for my well-being; "and the Duchess knows you also, and we can judge better than you."

"How can the Duchess know anything of me?" I inquired in surprise.

"Very simply; I sent your letters to my sister, who is her lady-in-waiting, and she gave them to her to read. The Princess then lived in St. Petersburg, but she is now in Würtemberg, which is much more convenient for you. Read her letter, and then sit down and write to her, I tell you, to express your thanks."

Mme. de Malet combated all my anxieties and my

scruples; she had an answer for every one of my objections, and, giving me no time to reflect, she presently persuaded me into acquiescence. The charming portrait that she painted of the character, the virtues, and the noble qualities of the Duchess Louis of Würtemberg finished my conquest, and I accepted the engagement before I had had time to think what I was doing. My kind friend was so certain of having assured my happiness and prosperity, and felt so deep a joy in this conviction, that I could not bear to vex her by making any long resistance.

I do not know what I wrote, nor how I got home; I could not sleep, for a crowd of reflections thronged my brain, and the prospect of so great a change in my life overwhelmed my intelligence. "Providence," I said to myself, "seems to favour my plans, since I have been chosen and preferred to so many worthier to fill a place for which I have not even made application. It is true that I made great sacrifices with this in view, and, in accepting it, I give up the society of a mad woman to live with persons of reason and intelligence. Nevertheless, my position is not what it was; I can support myself, I have gained friends, I am respected, well lodged, practically mistress of a pretty house where in future I may be very comfortable; what do I want more? When I decided to leave my country I had nothing of all this; now that I have won so much, shall I give up the solid reality to go and seek my fortune in a new career and in a country that is wholly strange to me? What should I gain by it?"

I told M. Royer of the engagement I had accepted; he did not approve of it. "We love you, why should you go away?" he said. "Are you sure of pleasing these strangers? And will they please you? Remember it is not a small sacrifice that you will have to make in giving up your country, your language, and your habits. When you had no resources these considerations were not of importance, but now the

circumstances have changed; if you do not suit this situation, what will become of you! Take my advice and do not give up a certainty for what is wholly uncertain, and remark, also, that you are offered less than you have here, where your duties are far easier to fulfil." All this was true—but I had accepted.

M. F—— said the same to me in expressing his regret at my departure. "If you are not content with your appointments," he added, "we could add to them." He even gave me to understand that in order to keep me in charge of his cousin the family was ready to assure me a suitable sum at Mdlle. d'A——'s death. I was more touched than I can express with such marks of confidence and esteem—but I had accepted.

It did, indeed, seem folly to go away, for I was now provided for in my own country, and I had no need to make further sacrifices. I had attained my object; in going beyond it I might fall into misfortune. I had carefully concealed from M. Royer that the Duchess of Würtemberg was taking me on trial only, so that at the end of six months I might be turned out, as servants say, if I had not succeeded in pleasing her. "You must remember," added M. F——, "that the greater part of the annoyances you have had to support are now done and will trouble you no more; save for having to put up occasionally with the society of a mad person you could live according to your own tastes. However, I am sure you will not think of going away till there is some one to replace you, and I warn you that I shall not be easy to please."

"I foresaw that objection," I said, "and am ready for it; it is another friend of Mme. Royer's that I intend to propose in my place, and if you refuse the second, I shall conclude you have been discontented with the first!" He was too polite not to answer as I desired.

As soon as I had taken the resolution to go away, I had formed a plan which prevented me from changing

my mind, and which would forbid me any regrets even if I did not succeed in pleasing the Duchess Louis, and found myself homeless again at the end of six months. When I told M. Royer that this princess had chosen me as governess to her two elder daughters, I asked him if he would allow me to suggest Mdlle. Elisabeth de la R——, another old friend of his wife's, as suitable to fill my place. "I ask you this question," I added, "because it has always surprised me that you did not choose her in the first place. Elisabeth is superior to me in every way, and more to be pitied; she is interesting both in herself and in her circumstances. In short, I have often wondered why you had preferred me."

"I hesitated," he replied, "for three long days and nights; you were both so unfortunate that it was painful, as well as difficult, to choose between you. However, it seemed to me that Elisabeth's circumstances were in themselves a reason against recommending her for the place, and I proposed you."

"If that is all," I said, "there need be no difficulty now."

I had often met Elisabeth de la R—— at Mme. Royer's house; they had been brought up in the same convent, and the old affection had reunited them after the great trials that each had come through. Victorine had learnt to forget hers in the home her husband made so happy for her, where she was surrounded by charming children that brought sunshine into her life. Elisabeth, on the contrary, was still in the midst of misfortune, and suffered from the greatest of all, for her father was in prison.

M. de la R——, who had been compromised in a plot against Napoleon, was arrested and confined in the Temple; there were serious accusations against him, and his life was menaced. The very sympathy that his companions showed in him increased his danger, in making him seem too important in the eyes of the Emperor, so that the deputies who dared

to beg for his pardon were received with great ungraciousness. "He has joined in an attempt against my life," Napoleon said; "justice must take her rights; he must die."

One of the deputies, perceiving that to press the question would only injure the unfortunate man whom they desired to save, hastened to add in a supplicating voice, "If your Majesty knows him to be guilty, there is no more for us to do than to appeal to your mercy, which is greater than justice, that we may save the life of a father whose death would make eleven orphans."

"If that be so," returned Napoleon, "I grant you M. de la R——'s life, but not his liberty."

He remained in the Temple, and Elisabeth was the only one of his numerous family who was permitted to live in Paris and to see her father. She went every day to the Temple to share the modest dinner of her dear prisoner, and returned at night to her lonely room, suffering the greatest privations, and often without a fire even in the depth of winter, for want of money to buy wood. At such times she would stay in bed till it was time to start for the prison. . . . She made many efforts to touch the heart of Napoleon. All Paris knew that one evening, after some fireworks on the Seine, a lovely young girl had thrown herself at the feet of the Emperor as he was quitting the Tuileries to return to Saint-Germain. Every one spoke of her courage, her tears, her beauty; but they did not hear the stern refusal that met her entreaties; and the crowd, sympathetic but frivolous, did not concern itself when Elisabeth was left standing alone, in the middle of the night, helpless and undefended and far from home. When the fever of enthusiasm and hope no longer supported her, when she felt herself crushed down by an icy discouragement, she could scarcely drag herself back to her humble lodging, and when she arrived there it was only to throw herself on her bed, shivering and seriously ill.

Elisabeth had become my constant thought; when I looked back, when I hesitated at the remembrance of all that I was giving up, her name came to my lips and consoled me. It seemed to me that she was held up to me by Providence as an example and an encouragement, and I was sincerely happy in thinking that I might help to make her position less hard to bear. I went straight to her when I left M. Royer, to tell her my plans. She only asked me to wait till she had spoken to her father, and very soon sent me her answer. She accepted gratefully.[1]

From this moment I hastened the arrangements for my departure, giving thereby great satisfaction to Mme. de Malet, who urged me to lose no time in taking up my new duties. When my preparations were nearly finished, I went to M. F—— to announce to him the day on which I proposed to start. He was much surprised.

"I have found no one to take your place," he said, "and I confess I had hoped to make you reconsider your decision. Can you not at least wait a little?"

"With difficulty, as I have found a worthy German who will keep me company and speak for me. I should not like to lose a chance that I might not meet with again. Take Mdlle. de la R—— in my place, and you will certainly be satisfied."

"She bears a name that is under suspicion, and my cousin's mad behaviour began by attracting the notice of the police, and made her *suspecte* also. We have had enough of that. . . . I am greatly embarrassed, and you give me so little time!"

"Exactly; I intended to do so," I thought to myself. Then, aloud, "That will not matter, monsieur, if you will take Mdlle. de la R—— in the meantime, until you find some one who suits you better. Let me bring her to see you; you would at least be sure

[1] I have since heard that she was on the point of leaving Paris, having no means of living there, and that her absence would have deprived her father of the only consolation left to him.

of giving your cousin into the charge of a most excellent person, whose noble and devoted character would ensure the tenderest care and service. You know that this young lady merits all your esteem." He invited us both to dinner with his mother. My friend impressed them most favourably, and was accepted in my place, for which happy result I was deeply thankful. I was sure that once they saw her they would find her pleasing; but the important thing was to give them no time to seek for another person, and I confess without any remorse that I had laid all my plans to this end. I will add here, to close this chapter of my story, that at the end of a few years Napoleon, touched by her filial virtues, accorded her her father's liberty, or at least commuted his penalty to exile at Provins, where he was allowed to live in peace. Elisabeth remained with Mdlle. d'A—— for nearly twenty years, and when her charge died, was generously rewarded by the family for her long and untiring service.

Before leaving Paris, I thought it my duty to go and thank the Baroness de Choiseul for having defended my reputation against the calumnies that were spread abroad against me. She received me very graciously; but when I announced my departure to her and explained its reason, she looked at me with astonishment, and said in a loud voice that seemed to me very harsh and cold, "What, cousin! *you* are going to educate princesses! But you yourself have had no education!" This speech stabbed me to the heart; it seemed to me to be rude and unsympathetic, and intentionally unkind. But she was quite right. When I learnt to realise all that my new duties included, when day by day I perceived their importance and all that they required of me, when every minute made a new claim on my intelligence, my tact, and my prudence, I was astonished at the thoughtlessness with which I had accepted so delicate and onerous a post, and I felt that the Baroness de Choiseul's speech had been

fully justified. Often, very often, in moments of difficulty and discouragement, I imagined that once more I heard that terrible "What, cousin!"

Mdlle. d'A—— said good-bye to me with pleasure, imagining that when I was gone she would have more liberty. She was very gracious to the friends who came to take leave of me, and her farewells were cordial and flattering; she even added to the wishes she had just expressed for my happiness, "I have no need at present of a lady-in-waiting; when I recover my throne, I shall myself select the ladies of my court."

Mdlle. de Malet, in urging me to start so soon, deprived me of the joy of seeing Mme. de Bézé once more. She was to arrive very shortly at Paris; but this was only one more sacrifice to add to those that had gone before. During my journey I discovered how many these were; the bustle of departure, the excitement of a definite decision had hitherto hidden them from me; but I realised all that I was giving up when I saw the Rhine, that majestic barrier which was to separate me, perhaps for ever, from my father, my friends, and my country. My future was wholly uncertain, and I felt myself much to be pitied. I could have wished to kneel down and kiss the dear earth of France, and I cried with all my heart, "Adieu, father; adieu, my country; adieu to all whom I know and love."

My companion left me at half-a-day's journey from Louisbourg,[1] and I made my entry into the town all alone. At the gate I was asked—in vain—what my business was; the German phrase that I had carefully learnt in advance had vanished from my brain, and I could not recall it. I could only give my name, and the officer who questioned me could not understand it; he handed me his note-book to write it down; but then he could not read it! At that we both

[1] May 10, 1807. The court of Würtemberg passed part of the spring and summer at Louisbourg, and the winter at Stuttgard.

laughed, and my driver joining in, we were allowed to pass, and arrived, laughing still, at the inn. "Do you understand French, monsieur?" I demanded of the first person who appeared, and what was my delight to hear the answer, "Yes, madame." Thank goodness! What a convenience! I ordered my dinner, and went to my room to pass the few hours in which I was still free to dispose of my time as pleased myself; I would not for worlds have lost a minute of it.

About five o'clock I wrote a note to Mdlle. de Bélonde, Mme. de Malet's sister, to whom I owed the offer of the post I was now to fill. In her I placed all my hopes of getting on in a country of which I knew neither the language nor the customs. "Come to me," I said, "I am very anxious to see you; come and give me some encouragement, and tell me about my new duties. You are my only support and consolation here, and in seeing you I shall feel less distant from all those whom I have left behind." This letter despatched, I felt that I no longer belonged to myself, and I awaited the answer with many heart-beatings and tremors. It was not long of arriving; in a very short time there appeared before me a man in a jacket of canary-yellow braided with silver, and wearing on his head a sort of cap surmounted by red, black, and yellow feathers. I took him, I confess, for some rope-dancer or mountebank of the kind, who had entered my room by mistake, and was just going to send him away when he handed me a letter, which proved to be the reply for which I was waiting.

"Mademoiselle de Bélonde," I read, "was buried three days ago; follow the runner."[1] That was all that at first I could take in; at the bottom of the few confused lines I saw the name of Chaillot. This cruelly unexpected news threw me into a sort of stupor which I find it hard to describe; in losing

[1] I had never seen one before. This kind of serving-man had long ceased to exist in France.

Mdlle. de Bélonde, in whom I had placed all my hopes, I felt as if once more I lost all that was left me of friends and country. I followed the runner mechanically, overcome with a distress which prevented me from being conscious of anything. I traversed streets, and then apartments, without seeing my surroundings, without any distinct idea of where I was, going straight on without pausing, till I felt myself pulled by my dress, and a voice said to me, "Where are you going, mademoiselle? You are to remain here." I roused myself with a start, and looked round; it was Mademoiselle de Chaillot, the governess of the two younger princesses. She made me some excuses for the confused wording of her note. "The address on yours," she explained, "was the cause, for it quite upset me." I was prodigiously upset myself and was glad to sit down. She gave me some details of Mdlle. de Bélonde's death, and spoke of the affection felt for her by the Duchess, who had lavished every care upon her during her illness. "Can I see the Duchess?" I inquired.

"No, she has gone to the theatre at Stuttgard; you will only see her to-morrow." This reply disconcerted me; I did not know, at that time, that princesses are less free to weep than we are; I did not know that they are often obliged to appear in public, hiding the deepest sorrows of their hearts with the smiling amiability that the world expects of them.

We were interrupted by the appearance of the four princesses, who had just been dressed to pay a visit to the queen,[1] accompanied by Mdlle. de Chaillot. If I was an object for their curiosity, they were not less interesting to me; I was delighted with the gentle and innocent faces of these four little girls, whose very simple dress seemed to make them the more charming.

I was left alone amongst people whose speech I did not understand, and feeling that I should give way if

[1] Charlotte-Augusta-Mathilda, Princess-Royal of England.

First Interview with the Duchess

I indulged in my sad reflections, I sat down to write a letter to Mme. de Malet, losing something of the oppression of my own grief as I sympathised with hers. I was interrupted by the Comte de Chaillot,[1] who, having heard from his daughter of my arrival, had left the court to come and welcome a compatriot. I found his conversation very agreeable. Shortly after, the princesses returned; I gave them the toys that I had brought for them, and the pleasure with which they received them brightened an evening that otherwise remains dark and sorrowful in my memory.

When all was quiet around me, I found no rest for myself. I was to see the Duchess the next morning, and I felt all the importance of this first interview. I walked up and down my room, trying to overcome the excitement that made sleep impossible, when I heard a noise outside which drew nearer, and presently my door opened. Mme. de Chaillot came in with a lady whose distinguished air and noble bearing declared to me her rank; I was struck with her beauty, but still more with the sweetness and benevolence of her expression.

"Mademoiselle," said the Duchess in a very kind voice, "I did not wish to put off till to-morrow an interview so important for both of us; we shall sleep the better once it is over, I am sure." And continuing with the graciousness that was peculiar to herself, she deigned to speak to me of the pain I must have felt in quitting my family and my country, and, passing to Mme. de Malet, whom she thought already informed of the sad news, she inquired how I had left her.

"She did not yet know her loss," I replied, "and was envying me the happiness of seeing her sister, and rejoicing that I should find a friend in her."

There was so much sympathy and *soul* in all that the Duchess said to me, her glance was so sincere and gentle, that I was already glad to feel myself in

[1] He was governor to Prince Adam, the eldest son of Duke Louis of Würtemberg.

her service, and only desired that I might merit her esteem, and prove myself worthy of her confidence, if not by my talents, at least by my care in obeying her orders. The sentiments inspired by this first interview, I may say at once, did not mislead me; and I can only thank God who allowed me the privilege of knowing and appreciating so noble a character. But hard though it is to keep silence on such a subject, respect forbids me to trace here the portrait of one whose great qualities were crowned by a modesty which I may not offend.

. . . . . .

I attached myself promptly to the four princesses confided to my care, and my life was thenceforward a happy one; I have grown old in this august house, loaded with favours in which my family has shared.

. . . . . .

And you, who have had a special part of this benevolence, you for whom these lines have been written, then a child, now wife and mother, blessed in the duties that these sweet names have bestowed on you; receive my prayers for your happiness and for that joy that a pure heart, such as yours, holds ever within itself!

THE END

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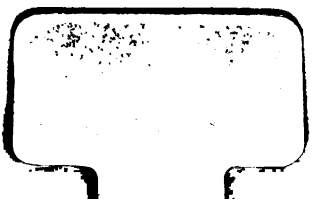
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